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African Bird Club

Bulletin of the African Bird Club

Vol 18 No 1 March 2011

Bird distributions in the Upper Zambezi Valley

Abyssinian endemics in Eritrea

Rare birds in Morocco 2007–09

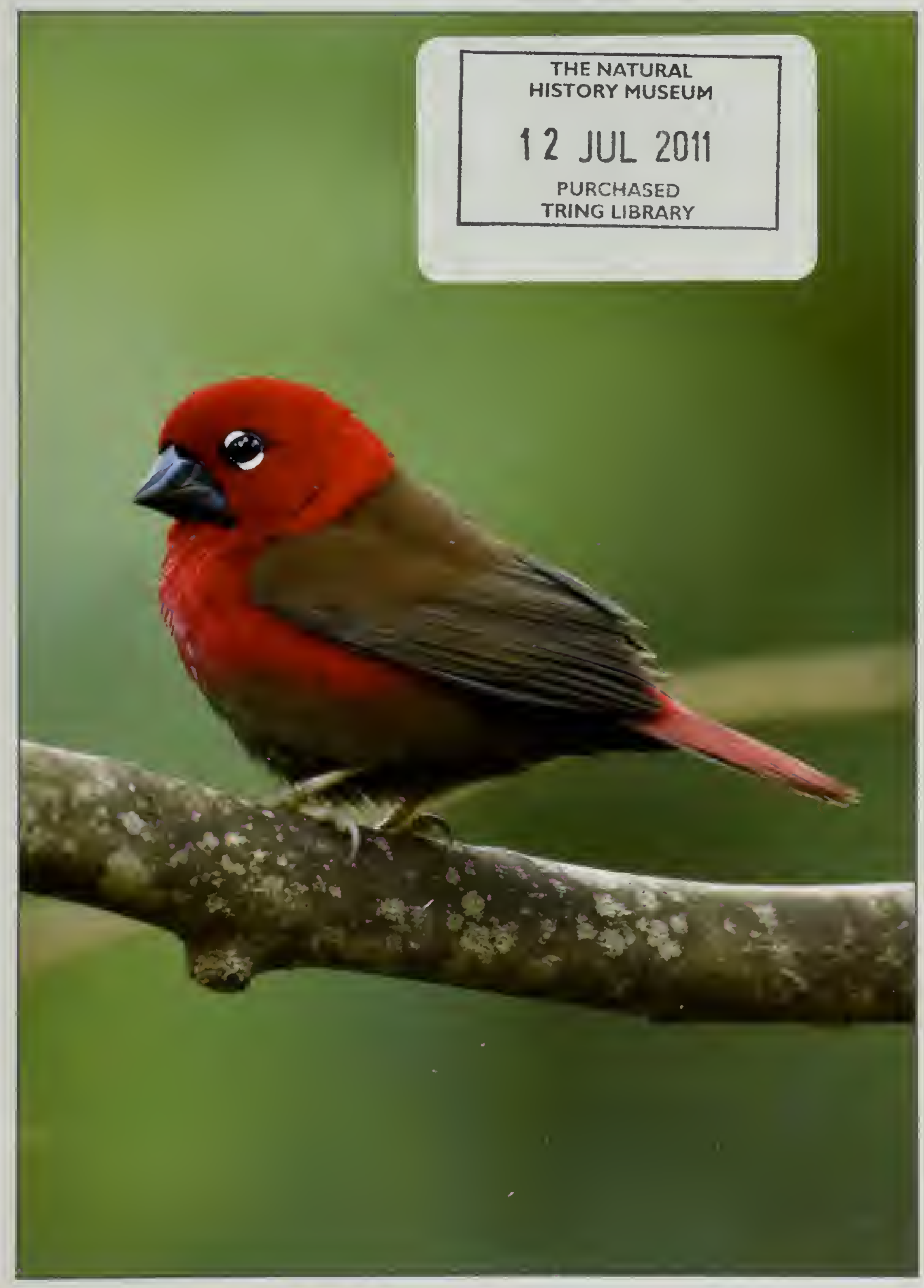
Waterbird survey of Quirimbas National Park, Mozambique

Satellite imagery and bird conservation in Africa

A new form of thrush babbler in Cameroon?

Lesser Kestrel in the Comoros

Endemic and special birds of Somaliland



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African Bird Club

The African Bird Club aims to:

- provide a worldwide focus for African ornithology
- encourage an interest in the conservation of the birds of the region
- liaise with and promote the work of existing regional societies
- publish a twice-yearly colour bulletin
- encourage observers to visit lesser known areas of the region
- encourage observers to actively search for globally threatened and near-threatened species
- run the ABC Conservation Programme

Registered Charity No 1053920

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The Bulletin of the African Bird Club

The Bulletin of the ABC provides a forum for news, letters, notices, recent publications, expedition results, reviews and interim publication of studies on African birds by contributors from throughout the world. Publication of results in the Bulletin of the ABC does not preclude publication of final results as journal papers either by the ABC or elsewhere. No material should, however, be submitted simultaneously to the Bulletin of the ABC and to any other publication.

Brief notes for contributors appear elsewhere in this Bulletin and further details are available from the Editor (editor@africanbirdclub.org).

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Club News

2010 British Birdwatching Fair

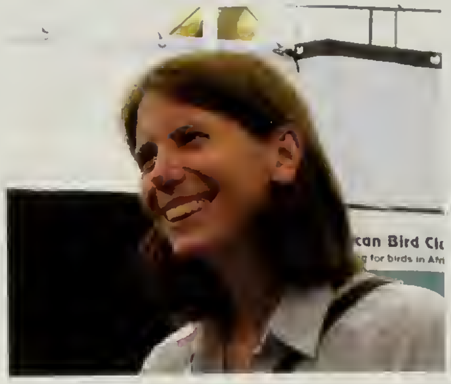
Attending the annual Birdfair has been an important event in the Club's calendar for 17 years. It provides an opportunity to advertise ABC to the >20,000 active birdwatchers who visit the Fair, which is held at Rutland Water in central England every August. The 2010 event was blessed with mostly good weather, and attended by the regular complement of exhibitors in seven marquees. With a comprehensive events and lecture programme, art marquee and outdoor displays, it is an essential event for keen birdwatchers from all over the world. There was an African theme to the 2010 Birdfair as the supported project was BirdLife International's work stemming the loss of habitats for some of southern Ethiopia's rarest endemic birds.

As always, the Club's stand provided an opportunity to meet our members, recruit new ones, sell ABC goods and make personal contact with our Corporate Sponsors. A couple of new features were an identification quiz and a map of Africa where people who had visited the continent on birdwatching trips or are active local birders were invited to mark those countries they had visited. Both these were effective in bringing people to the stand and lively discussions on all aspects of African birding ensued. As usual, the 'Find the Plover' board was popular and this simple raffle raised almost UK£500.

The profit from the sales goods and the takings from the raffle augment the Conservation Fund. Further details of the Club's expenditure on conservation projects are set out on pp. 4–5. It was a pleasure to have Claire Spottiswoode visit the stand to sign copies of her new book *Where to Watch Birds in Ethiopia*.

ABC stand at the Rutland Birdfair, August 2010 (Alan Williams)

Le stand du ABC au Birdfair de Rutland, août 2010 (Alan Williams)



Claire Spottiswoode, who was signing copies of her Ethiopia book on the stand (Alan Williams)

Claire Spottiswoode, qui a signé des exemplaires de son livre sur l'Ethiopie au stand (Alan Williams)

As usual the Club's stand was manned by volunteers, mainly Council members and other helpers. We could not attend this important annual event without their help, for which we are very grateful.

Contributed by Alan Williams

ABC website

Bird images.—The African Bird Image Database (AFBID) held over 15,000 images of 1,970 species at the time of writing (January 2011). Some 692 photographers have provided images from 53 African countries. New capabilities on the system permit a user to search by species or country, or a combination, e.g. to show all images of Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* in South Africa (eight at present). We will improve their quality by deleting some of the older and less good ones. Please continue to load high-quality images, especially if you have any of the several hundred missing species on the Africa list. We would also be pleased to receive images from countries where we have none to date, including Ascension, Burundi, Equatorial Guinea, Mauritania, Swaziland, Togo and Tristan da Cunha.

Bird sounds.—The number of recordings on xeno-canto.org/Africa continues to increase. There are 9,986 recordings in the worldwide xeno-canto collection of 1,408 species that are on the ABC checklist, i.e. 54.8% of the total 2,571 species. These were provided by 55 people but the number of contributors is growing steadily.

Have you made recordings of African birds? Are they perhaps already on your own homepage, or just collecting dust in the cellar? Consider becoming a member and contributing them—the more complete the coverage of xeno-canto/Africa, the more useful the site will be. We are not only interested in 'new' species, but also in recordings of all subspecies, from locations across a species' range, at different seasons, etc. Please dig out your old tapes and take your recording equipment on your next trip.

We are also making some changes to align the taxonomy on xeno-canto with the IOC world list (www.worldbirdnames.org). Until now we have been using separate lists for the continents. The IOC list is actively maintained, available online to all, and, most importantly, IOC is working toward a list that includes all subspecies.

Country resources.—We continue to update the country resources section of the website with new data. Please send us information and photos, which you would like us to add for your country. This section has been live for over six years and we will look at ways to improve it. For example, we have the capability to link to AFBID, so we can consider displaying images of species from each country.

The country checklists continue to be a well-used part of the ABC website with over 10,000 downloads to date. A new version was launched in March 2010, which had *c.*1,300 new and revised records. The following countries were subject to significant change: Comoros, Congo (Brazzaville), Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Libya. A new status of 'SAT' denotes records of satellite-tracked birds. We would like to thank all correspondents for their suggestions for new and revised records. We will include those records published in peer-reviewed papers and plan new versions of the checklists by early 2012.

African Birding / ABC forum.—There has been a significant increase in activity on the African Birding e-mail distribution list recently. With over 1,000 members, it is certainly a way to collect information and raise issues among a wide audience quickly. Recent items of note have included the status of Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus* and Secretary Bird *Sagittarius serpentarius* across Africa. The ABC Forum on the other hand was set up originally for discussion and debate, and to act as a repository of information. It has *c.*140 members but there has been little recent activity. Rather than risk losing valuable information sent as e-mails, we will consider how to use the forum to store some of this content by topic.

Finance / sales.—The website is also a major financial tool for the Club and over UK£14,900 was received in credit card payments for membership, sponsorship and sales in 2010. The annual report and accounts for 2009 can be found on the 'About the ABC' page—the 2010 annual report and accounts will be uploaded as soon as possible. In the absence of a Sales Officer, we have had to suspend some online merchandise sales. Please continue to purchase books and sound-recordings from WildSounds via the website as this generates significant commission for the Conservation Fund.

Citation.—We were very pleased that our website was allocated the 'best of the web' spot in the January 2010 edition of UK's *Birdwatching* magazine as follows. 'The African Bird Club's website is a superb tool for anyone with an interest in African birds. Bearing in mind that many of the UK's birds either winter or pass through Africa, there's much here for UK birders. Among the star features of this crisp site is a comprehensive photo gallery. The country-by-country breakdown is a treat too, with bird and birding information for every African country – a wealth of information perfect for planning a trip or for general browsers.'

Contributed by John Caddick

Sales

We are currently only selling cards and paintings via the website. Items such as clothing and mugs are only available at the Birdfair, with a smaller range at the AGM. ABC produced a new range of mugs last year using a specially commissioned painting by Martin Woodcock. This year (available at the AGM and Birdfair) we are producing new T-shirts using the same design. You could have a matching mug and T-shirt! If anyone is interested in taking on the Sales Officer role please contact the Chairman, Keith Betton (chairman@africanbirdclub.org).

African Bird Club *Conservation Fund*

This is my first report as Conservation Officer since formally taking over from Steph Tyler at the AGM in April 2010. On behalf of ABC and the many Conservation Fund recipients, I would like to thank Steph for her dedicated work to conserve African birds during the eight years she held the position.

New awards

Status and viability of Lilian's Lovebird in Malaŵi

Council awarded UK£960 for a study of the Near Threatened Lilian's Lovebird *Agapornis lilianae* by Tiwonge Mzumara. The species occurs in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania and Malaŵi, where it forms large flocks associated with mopane woodlands. In Malaŵi, it is known only from Liwonde National Park where the population is estimated at *c*.1,000 individuals. Illegal hunting of birds for food is prevalent in the park and the technique used, poisoning small pools of water during the dry season, is non-selective. The study's main objective is to collect data on the ecology of the lovebird—even its abundance and distribution have never been quantified—and to learn more concerning the bird-hunting activities practiced by surrounding communities. The award, kindly sponsored by Paul Lascelles (Hyde-Lascelles), will cover the cost of producing brochures describing the research's findings and permit the involvement in the field work of a student from the Biology Department of University of Malaŵi's Chancellor College.

Lilian's Lovebird / Inséparable de Lilian *Agapornis lilianae* (Marius Coetzee/Oryx Photographic Tours www.oryxphotography.com)

Ugandan student training

Prof. Derek Pomeroy, of Makerere University, Kampala, was awarded UK£1,330, generously provided by Tasso Leventis, to train student ornithologists. For several years, the National Biodiversity Data Bank (NBDB) at the Makerere University Institute of Environment and Natural Resources (MUIENR) has been training young scientists through a programme of internship, typically for a few months to a year. Many interns have been trained at MUIENR, among them Dr Julius Arinaitwe, who is now Head of BirdLife International's Africa Secretariat, and Achilles Byaruhanga who runs *Nature*Uganda. The training is now being widened to include joint activities with the Department of Zoology. Students will be trained to assess how birds are adapting to urban environments, engage in monitoring activities in parts of Uganda using a variety of census techniques, and learn accurate observation, recording and data analysis during on-the-job work experience in the NBDB.

Fighting a 'petrel' fire

ABC Conservation Fund contributed UK£250 towards the BirdLife International appeal in aid of Zino's Petrel *Pterodroma madeira*, Europe's rarest seabird (see also p. 9), which nests on just a handful of ledges in the rugged mountains of Madeira. Once on the brink of extinction, this Endangered species had recovered to around 130–160 mature individuals in recent years as a result conservation work led by the Natural Park of Madeira and supported by SPEA (BirdLife in Portugal). In August 2010 a massive forest fire struck the bird's breeding cliffs, when young were still in their burrows. As soon as the soil cooled, staff from the Natural Park of Madeira assessed the damage: 25 young and three adults had died, and only 13 young had survived in their nesting chambers. Apart from direct mortality and decreased breeding success, the fire caused significant erosion and destroyed much of the natural vegetation as well as many nesting burrows. An appeal was launched to urgently

Electrocuted Egyptian Vulture / Vautour percnoptère *Neophron percnopterus*, Sudan, autumn 2010 (Ivaylo Angelov)

raise funds to maintain the area free from invasive exotic plants, cover some areas with an anti-erosion blanket, and construct artificial burrows before the winter.

Report

Survey of vultures in Sudan

Ivaylo Angelov from BSPB, the Bulgarian BirdLife Partner, and colleagues from the Sudanese Wildlife Society were awarded UK£1,000 to survey the Red Sea coast of north-east Sudan. The expedition was co-funded by a grant from the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund. The team found 17 electrocuted Egyptian Vultures *Neophron percnopterus* under a power line near Port Sudan, which was first reported as a cause of vulture mortality by the German ornithologist Gerhard Nikolaus. He found 55 electrocuted Egyptian Vultures there in 1982–83 and a further five in 2003. The total reported to date is thus nearly 80, but this is surely just the 'tip of the iceberg'. In the past, the Port Sudan area was the most significant known stopover site of Egyptian Vultures in Sudan during autumn migration. However, despite that the expedition was mounted in September / October (during the peak migration period) very few were seen. The power line was constructed in the 1950s and Angelov believes that it has probably caused the deaths of hundreds, possibly thousands of Egyptian Vultures, which was recently listed as an Endangered species by IUCN. Other victims of this power line included several Lappet-faced Vultures *Torgos tracheliotus* (Vulnerable), Steppe Eagles *Aquila nipalensis* and a Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraaetus fasciatus*. The expedition discovered a territorial pair of the latter, suggesting that the species breeds in Sudan.

Electrocuted Bonelli's Eagle / Aigle de Bonelli *Hieraaetus fasciatus*, Sudan, autumn 2010 (Ivaylo Angelov)

High mortality during migration and at wintering sites is considered one of the main factors in the rapid decline of Egyptian Vulture in the Balkans. During these periods Egyptian Vultures often roost on electric pylons. The power line in Sudan is sited close to large farms that attract many birds and Angelov speculates this single power line may have decimated Egyptian Vulture populations that migrate along the western Red Sea coast and breed in Eastern Europe to Central Asia and the Middle East. He plans to use satellite telemetry in future research to confirm whether Bulgarian birds use this route. Insulating the power line and convincing the Sudanese Electricity Company to use safer types of pylons are evidently priorities for the conservation of the species.

Dr Chris Magin, on behalf of the Conservation Committee

The ABC website (www.africanbirdclub.org/club/consfund_projects.html) shows the complete list of conservation awards made since the programme's inception ten years ago. The remarkable total of in excess of UK£90,000 has been donated during this period. You can also view many of the final project reports on the same page.

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Copy deadlines
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are available on the ABC web site at: www.africanbirdclub.org/club/advertise.html

Africa Round-up

General

Latest satellite-tracking surprise

Bernd & Chris Meyburg have recently reported the following. "For the first time since 1992 when we started satellite tracking Lesser Spotted Eagles *Aquila pomarina*, a one-year-old bird crossed the Bab al-Mandab strait at the south-east end of the Red Sea [on 9 October 2010]. I had fitted this young eagle in July 2009 with a GPS. It wintered in Tanzania and migrated to Ukraine in spring via the Caucasus east of the Black Sea. It migrated south again this autumn on almost the same route and passed through eastern Syria into Saudi Arabia. Following the well-known route of Steppe Eagles *A. nipalensis* along the east coast of the Red Sea it arrived at the Bab al-Mandab. This spring a young Lesser Spotted Eagle reached the African side but did not cross."

Source: Bernd & Chris Meyburg in litt. *to African Birding, October 2010*

Lesser Spotted Eagle / Aigle pomarin *Aquila pomarina* (Dick Forsman)

Red Knot declines linked to refuelling area

Red Knots *Calidris canutus* of the nominate race, which breed in Taimyr, Siberia, and of which three-quarters of the population winters on the Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania, have seriously declined over the last two decades. Major population declines have also been noted further south, in Guinea-Bissau, Namibia and South Africa. Dutch researchers found that during this time food densities at the wintering sites have increased, suggesting that Red Knot declines were not due to local changes at those sites. Casper Kraan and co-workers therefore investigated the knot's food stocks in the Dutch Wadden Sea, the main refuelling area of *C. c. canutus* during its southbound migration. They discovered that in the period 1996–2005, 86% of its suitable foraging area in the Dutch Wadden Sea was lost, mainly due to bottom disturbance by shellfish dredging in this otherwise protected area. The researchers conclude that the decline in suitability of the Dutch Wadden Sea as a refuelling site may have led to decreases in the relatively unspoilt wintering areas in West and southern Africa.

Red Knot / Bécasseau maubèche *Calidris canutus* (Ben van den Broek)

Source: Ardea *98, pp. 155–160*

New insights into Blue Swallow movements

Blue Swallow *Hirundo atrocaerulea* is a threatened (currently ranked Vulnerable) intra-African migrant with breeding populations in three geographically disjunct regions across the south-east half of Africa. A new study analysed stable hydrogen, nitrogen and carbon isotope ratios in feather keratin to determine whether these vary among breeding populations, and whether feathers can be used to infer migratory connections between the breeding and non-breeding areas. James Wakelin and his colleagues found that the three major breeding populations differed significantly in terms of some of their feather values. They also analysed feathers from seven individuals caught in the non-breeding range on the shores of Lake Victoria in Uganda. A discriminant function analysis assigned four of these birds to the South Africa / Swaziland breeding population and two to the Malaŵi / Tanzania breeding population. Overall, the study's authors conclude that there is overlap in the wintering ranges of at least two of the three major breeding populations.

Source: J. Ornithol. *DOI 10.1007/s10336-010-0562-4*

Conservation titles available free to readers in developing countries

The British Ecological Society and the NHBS Environment Bookstore together are offering free ecology and conservation books to readers and professionals in developing nations. The aim of the scheme is to provide ecology and conservation books to those outside Western Europe, North America, Japan, Australia and New Zealand otherwise unable to obtain them, thereby spreading ecological knowledge as widely as possible. The scheme is a collaboration between the British Ecological Society (who pay for the postage), the NHBS Environment Bookstore (who organise the distribution) and the publishers and authors of the books (who provide the books for free). For further information, please see http://www.nhbs.com/Conservation/gratis-books.php.

North Africa

International Advisory Group for Northern Bald Ibis news

In summer 2010, the 92-page summary report of the actions and activities of the International Advisory Group for Northern Bald Ibis (*Geronticus eremita*) since 2006 was published—it is available free for download at www.iagnbi.org or by e-mailing Chris.Bowden@rspb.org.uk. The report updates all aspects from research and conservation actions for the wild populations in Morocco and Syria, experimental release and reintroduction methodology in Turkey, Austria, Spain and Morocco, as well as other related articles from Ethiopia, Yemen, Algeria and more. Also included are updated conservation priorities for the species, and the outputs from a meeting held in Palmyra, Syria, pertaining to the Species Action Plan for the eastern population, for which BirdLife International is partially responsible for implementing.

Source: Chris Bowden in litt. *to Africa Birding June 2010*

An undescribed taxon of Reed Warblers in northern Morocco

European Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* normally winter south of the Sahara, where they undergo a complete moult. During a ringing programme in the Smir marshes, northern Morocco, in 2004–08, moulting individuals, both adults and juveniles, were regularly trapped. Recaptures during the breeding season proved that at least some of the moulting individuals were of local origin. Some moulting birds also probably overwintered in the Smir marshes. It therefore appears that the local breeding population is (at least partly) sedentary. These birds differ from European Reed Warblers in measurements, plumage coloration and moult pattern.

The taxonomic position of this population is currently unclear. They might be African Reed Warblers *A. baeticatus* or a new race of African or European Reed Warblers.

Source: Ardea *98, pp. 225–234*

Denham's Bustard removed from the Western Palearctic list . . .

Two old records of Denham's Bustard *Neotis denhami* in the Western Palearctic, from northern Chad in April 1953 and July 1957, have been reviewed by Marcel Haas and Pierre-André Crochet, who have suggested that the identification in both cases should be considered uncertain and the species removed from the Western Palearctic list.

Source: Dutch Birding *32, pp. 257–258*

. . . and Olive-backed Pipit added to the Moroccan list

The Moroccan Rare Birds Committee has accepted a record of an Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*, observed on 8–9 November 2007 at Agadir, as the first for Morocco (see also p. 54 in this issue). This is also the first for the African continent.

Source: Go-South Bull. *7 p. 20*

Pied Crow / Corbeau pie
Corvus albus (Dick Forsman)

Pied Crows breed in southern Morocco

A recent article in *Dutch Birding* reports the discovery of a small breeding population of Pied Crows *Corvus albus* in Western Sahara, Morocco, in December 2009. This constitutes the first country record and the first breeding in the Western Palearctic, where the species was previously known from single records in Libya and Algeria. It seems likely that other principally Afrotropical bird species will be found in this, the south-west, corner of the Western Palearctic given increasing visits by European birders.

Source: Dutch Birding *32, pp. 329–332*

Marsh Owls at Merja Zerga declining

In the past two years, the small breeding population of Marsh Owls *Asio capensis* at the well-known site of Merja Zerga, in north-west Morocco, has reportedly declined rapidly, presumably because of disturbance by locals setting rushes on fire, although there are also reports of pressure by birding tourists.

Source: Dutch Birding *32, p. 210*

Marsh Owl / Hibou du Cap
Asio capensis (Phil Palmer, www.birdholidays.co.uk)

African Openbill recorded in Egypt

The first confirmed Western Palearctic record of African Openbill *Anastomus lamelligerus* involved a female or immature photographed in southern Egypt in May 2009. Two old records from the country, in July 1919 and August 1938, are considered to be uncertain, but the recently formed Egyptian Ornithological Rarities Committee (EORC) has accepted the 2009 record as being both correctly identified and a wild bird. Rare bird claims from Egypt should be submitted to the EORC using a special form, which can be downloaded from www2.mnhn.fr/crpbo/IMG/doc/EORC_AERC_form.doc.

Source: Dutch Birding *32, pp. 254–256, 265*

African Openbill / Bec-ouvert africain *Anastomus lamelligerus* (Liz Leyden)

White-tailed Eagles breeding in Egypt

Not recent news, but a paper in *Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl.* has provided proof, in the form of descriptions and photographs of three eggs, for the oft-repeated claim that White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* formerly bred in Egypt's Nile Delta region. All of the eggs were collected in the 1860s and 1870s, and the species probably did not nest in the region much later than this. What remains to be established is whether the Egyptian population warranted subspecific status; the name *cinereus* is available for these birds.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl. *130, pp. 208–214*

Atlantic Ocean islands

Fire delivers huge blow to Europe's rarest seabird

In mid-August 2010 a massive forest fire on Madeira killed several breeding adults and 65% of the nestlings of Zino's Petrel *Pterodroma madeira*, which is listed as globally Endangered. BirdLife International and SPEA (BirdLife in Portugal) immediately launched an emergency appeal for funds to undertake conservation work before the winter. By the time of writing (in November 2010) more than UK£14,000 had been donated by BirdLife's supporters. Zino's Petrel is one of the rarest birds in the world, nesting only in the rugged central massif of Madeira. Once on the verge of extinction with numbers just a few tens of pairs, intense conservation action, led by the Parque Natural da Madeira (PNM) with support from SPEA, the Freira Conservation Project and Funchal Municipal Museum, has seen its population grow to almost 80 pairs. As soon as the ground had cooled down sufficiently, PNM staff visited the breeding cliffs to assess the damage: 25 young and three adults were dead, and only 13 young fledglings were found alive. As well as the dead birds, the fire exacerbated soil erosion, with several nesting burrows having disappeared. "The loss of 65% of this year's potential young is a huge blow to Zino's Petrel. Our immediate conservation efforts are focusing on helping the remaining 13 fledglings to survive and minimising the risk of further soil erosion on the breeding ledges", said Ana Isabel Fagundes, SPEA's Madeira Coordinator. Encouragingly, the immediate conservation action taken by PNM at the breeding colony appears to be have worked: "Since our first visit to the breeding ledges, we have monitored the 13 surviving fledglings closely and can confirm that they are still being fed by their parents and appear to be healthy", reported Paulo Oliveira. PNM and SPEA have developed an action plan for the breeding colony. Immediate measures needed include covering areas with anti-erosion materials and constructing artificial nesting burrows, both of which have proven successful at other seabird colonies on neighbouring Bugio. Other planned work includes taking steps to help the natural vegetation recover through seed dispersal.

Sources: BirdLife International press release, August 2010; World Birdwatch *32(4), p. 26*

Identification of north-east Atlantic gadfly petrels

The identification at sea of Fea's Petrel *Pterodroma f. feae*, Desertas Petrel *P. f. deserta* and Zino's Petrel *P. madeira* has been extensively treated in a 37-page article by Hadoram Shirihai, Vincent Bretagnolle and Francis Zino in *Birding World*. The paper is illustrated through a colour plate by John Cox and no less than 90 photographs, mostly by the first author. Identification of these three taxa at sea is extremely difficult and was previously hampered by the failure to identify usable features. The present paper attempts to rectify this situation and discusses features that are 'conclusive', 'supportive', 'inconclusive' and 'of no use'.

Source: Birding World *23, pp.239–275*

Eleonora's Falcon increases in Canary Islands

A 2007–08 survey of the Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonorae* population in the Canaries, which breeds on four uninhabited islets in the northernmost part of the archipelago, found 307 breeding pairs. During a previous survey, which was conducted in 2000–01 and used the same methods, only 200 pairs were counted. The causes for this substantial increase are unclear. Population increases have recently also been reported from Morocco, Sardinia, Sicily and Greece. Despite their increase, Eleonora's Falcons in the Canary Islands have not colonised nearby islands, perhaps because of the presence of invasive species, such as rats, cats and goats, and human disturbance.

Source: Ornis Fennica *87, pp. 35–40*

Common Raven in the Canaries in decline

Formerly very abundant throughout most of the archipelago, a recent (2009) survey found just 44 pairs of Common Ravens *Corvus corax tingitanus* on four of the seven main islands in the Canaries. La Palma with 17 pairs was the largest single total, and just five pairs currently persist on Gomera. Most pairs appear to breed in relatively close proximity to areas with livestock, such as goats and sheep, and illegal poisoning appears to be a significant cause in the latest decline, which the authors of the recent survey measure as between 30% and 80%, according to island, within the last 25 years.

Source: Vieraea *38, pp. 123–132*

A reprieve for St Helena's Wirebird

A census of the Critically Endangered and endemic Wirebird (St Helena Plover) *Charadrius sanctaehelenae* conducted by the St Helena National Trust in January 2010, found 397 adults, six juveniles, 30 chicks and 20 nests. This is an increase of 77 adults (or 23%) compared with the 2009 count, when there were 51 fewer adults than the previous year. It is believed that the 2009 decline may have been the result of the long periods of wet weather the island experienced that year. The Wirebird is mainly threatened by habitat loss due to the proliferation of alien invasive plants on pastureland, as well as by feral cats and Common Mynas *Acridotheres tristis* that prey on chicks and eggs. Plans for the construction of an airport on Prosperous Bay Plain, an important part of the species' habitat, were put on hold by the British government because of the global economic crisis.

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding *15(3), p. 13*

Tristan Thrush: a remarkable seabird predator

Tristan Thrush *Nesocichla eremita*, an aberrant thrush confined to the Tristan da Cunha archipelago in the southern Atlantic Ocean, is known to feed on seabird eggs. Peter Ryan and Robert Ronconi found that they are able to crack the eggs of birds as large as small albatrosses. In a small Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis* colony on Inaccessible Island, almost half of all egg losses were due to Tristan Thrushes. The thrushes also enter burrows to remove and kill petrel chicks of up to at least 70 g. They are thus potentially important predators of seabird eggs and chicks. Tristan Thrushes previously were recorded killing adult White-bellied Storm-petrels *Fregetta grallaria* on Inaccessible Island. The researchers recently observed that White-faced Storm-petrels *Pelagodroma marina* also fall prey to the thrushes. It seems likely that the thrushes hunt adult storm-petrels directly, taking them from their burrows.

Source: Ardea *98, pp. 247–250*

Tristan Thrush / Grive de Tristan da Cunha *Nesocichla eremita* (Peter Berglin)

West and Central Africa

Avifauna of Éhotilé Islands National Park, Côte d'Ivoire, documented

Éhotilé Islands National Park, situated in south-east Côte d'Ivoire's coastal zone, comprises six islands in Aby lagoon and has a terrestrial area of just 550 ha, making it the country's smallest national park. During surveys conducted in 1996–2008 and totalling 56 days of field work, 190 bird species were identified, among them the Red List species African Skimmer *Rynchops flavirostris*, Brown-cheeked Hornbill *Bycanistes cylindricus* and Green-tailed Bristlebill *Bleda eximius*.

Source: Malimbus *32, pp. 89–102*

Song dialects of Splendid Sunbird analysed

Song dialects of Splendid Sunbirds *Cinnyris coccinigastrus* recorded in seven West and Central African countries were analysed by Lew Grimes. Songs recorded at intervals of several years at fixed localities suggest that changes in local dialects are slight over intervals of up to 11 years but are more apparent over a 30-year interval. The wide range of macro-geographic dialects recorded may reflect changes in the sunbird's habitat, which ranges from wooded savannas through farm bush, scrub and forest edge to gardens, but this remains to be proven. The author suggests that the Splendid Sunbird is an ideal candidate for research into song dialects, as its song is both considerably varied over its range and structurally simple.

Source: Malimbus *32, pp. 69–88*

Baltic Gulls winter mainly in the Congo Basin

The Congo Basin appears to be an important wintering area for Lesser Black-backed Gulls *Larus fuscus* of the nominate race *fuscus* ('Baltic Gull'). This conclusion is reached by Henrik Kylin and co-authors following a review of the literature, museum specimens, ring recoveries and unpublished records, initiated after the observation, by the first author, of at least 15 nominate Lesser Black-backed Gulls on Lake Tumba, Congo-Kinshasa, in March 2009. It appears that the taxon is widely but sparsely distributed throughout the vast network of rivers. Due to the difficulties of undertaking field work in the basin, this wintering area was previously largely unknown. The authors suggest that the main wintering range of *L. f. fuscus* extends from the Rift Valley lakes west into the Congo Basin and, contrary to what was hitherto generally believed, only a small part of the population winters on the East African coast.

Source: Ornis Fennica *87, pp. 106–113*

East Africa

Over-sea migrations of Eleonora's Falcons

Satellite-tracking studies continue to refine our knowledge of the routes and capabilities of migrant raptors in particular. One such recent study, which tracked 11 different Eleonora's Falcons *Falco eleonorae* from their breeding grounds in the Balearic Islands to their winter quarters in Africa, demonstrated inter-annual variability in the routes followed by the birds when crossing the Strait of Mozambique, between Madagascar and eastern continental Africa. These results illustrate high behavioural plasticity among individuals, which are able to change their migration route from one year to another in response to meteorological conditions, thus minimising the risk associated with long ocean crossings, by selecting winds blowing towards Africa for departure and changing their routes to avoid low pressure areas en route.

Source: Intern. J. Biometeorol. *DOI 10.1007/s00484–010–0368–3*

Taita Apalis teeters close to the brink

Taita Apalis *Apalis fuscigularis* is endemic to the Taita Hills, in south-

Taita Apalis / Apalis à collier *Apalis (thoracica) fuscigularis* (Clive Mann)

east Kenya, and is one of the rarest birds in the world, being known from only five small forest fragments at 1,500–2,200 m. Its known global range is <600 ha. In 2001, the population was estimated to be just 300–650 individuals, making it already Critically Endangered. However, new research undertaken in 2009–10 strongly suggests that a major population crash is taking place. Sightings in April–May 2009 dropped by *c.*38% and repeat counts in September–December 2009 and May–July 2010 revealed even larger decreases, approaching 80%. Consequently the population might now number as few as 60–130 individuals, almost all of them at Ngangao, a forest fragment of just *c.*120 ha. The causes of the decline are unclear. Little or no illegal logging is now occurring and human disturbance has been significantly reduced due to efforts by the Kenya Forest Service and local conservation groups. The impacts of other potential factors, such as nest predation and climate change are unknown. Similarly, research is also urgently needed on the second Critically Endangered bird found in the Taita Hills forests, Taita Thrush *Turdus helleri*, whose population has not been assessed recently, but might be threatened by the same factors already affecting the apalis.

Sources: BirdLife International press release, August 2010; World Birdwatch *32(4), p. 9*

Good and bad news for Prince Ruspoli's Turaco

Recent surveys of Prince Ruspoli's Turaco *Tauraco ruspolii* suggest that rates of habitat change have been very fast in the north of the species' range, where large areas have been converted to agriculture and plantations of exotic trees. "The results of this survey will be of immediate use for conservation, as the Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society [EWNHS] prepares to develop a Conservation Action Plan for Prince Ruspoli's Turaco", said Mengistu Wondafrash, Executive Director of EWNHS. In 1995, the species was estimated to number 10,000 individuals, but alarming rates of habitat destruction were feared to have had negative effects. Fortunately, in the central part of its range, the woodlands bordering Sede and Lela Lemu forests are still largely intact, and support high densities of the species. This area is now clearly a key site for the species' conservation, as it hosts the most important surviving population. However, the survey also found that rates of illegal logging and agricultural expansions are increasing in the area, and rates of habitat destruction are set to increase as the road system will soon be upgraded to support the expansion of the mining industry. Urgent action is now needed to improve the conservation of Sede and Lela Lemu forests and of the woodland belt that surrounds them.

Source: BirdLife International press release, November 2010

Biofuel threat to Kenyan IBA continues

Kenya's National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) has refused a licence for a 50,000-ha biofuel plantation at Dakatcha Woodland Important Bird Area (IBA) north of the Sabaki River. However, they advised the proponent to 'redesign and scale down the project to pilot level to prove sustainability before an EIA license can be issued for the entire proposed area of 50,000 ha'. Dakatcha, which has no formal protection status, harbours significant populations of the globally Endangered Sokoke Pipit *Anthus sokokensis* and is one of only two known sites for the Endangered Clarke's Weaver *Ploceus golandi*, while the minority Watha communities around the forest depend on it for their livelihoods and cultural practices. If the project goes ahead they would be displaced from their ancestral lands. Kenya Jatropha Energy Ltd. (an Italian-owned company) has identified 50,000 ha for conversion to grow a plant used for biodiesel production which is largely untested and potentially destructive. "We understand that the pilot project has already been submitted, but NEMA has not made it public", warned Paul Matiku of NatureKenya. Pointing out that Kenya Jatropha Energy Ltd. had begun bulldozing forest at Dakatcha before the EIA was advertised for comment, Paul Matiku said: "it is evident that the project proponent does not have respect for the law." While there is a short reprieve for Dakatcha, BirdLife considers this a worrying sign of things to come. BirdLife believes that 80% of the Jatropha oil is due to go to the EU market in support of the EU biofuels target, with only 20% staying in Kenya. In early July, NatureKenya staff accompanying a Kenya Television Network reporter who wanted to look into the situation at Dakatcha, along with rangers from the Kenya Wildlife Service, were attacked by armed supporters of the Jatropha project. NatureKenya's car was damaged, but its occupants unhurt; however, two passers-by were injured.

Clarke's Weaver / Tisserin de Clarke *Ploceus golandi* (Steve Garvie)

Source: BirdLife International press release, August 2010

Major East Africa initiative

BirdLife International and the Critical Ecosystem Partnership

Fund (CEPF) have launched a new initiative to prepare a conservation and investment strategy for mountain ranges across eastern Africa, from Saudi Arabia and Yemen in the north to Zimbabwe in the south. Collectively termed the Eastern Afromontane Biodiversity Hotspot, the region covers a total area of >1,000,000 km^2 across 16 countries and comprises three ancient massifs: the Eastern Arc Mountains and Southern Rift, the Albertine Rift, and the Ethiopian Highlands. "The Eastern Afromontane Biodiversity Hotspot is incredibly important for wildlife and people", said Julius Arinaitwe (BirdLife's Director for Africa). Around 7,600 plants, 1,300 birds, 500 mammals, 350 reptiles, 230 amphibians and 890 fishes have been recorded to date. But, despite the huge biological and socio-economic value of the hotspot, just *c*.15% is currently protected and only 10% of the original vegetation remains in pristine condition. Threats include habitat loss, due to converting land for agriculture, plantations and commercial estates, as well as logging, fires, mining, development of infrastructure, gathering of firewood, and collection of plants for medicinal use, while hunting and disease have led to major declines in the populations of many species. To launch the new initiative, a series of workshops and national consultations are planned. An inception workshop held in Cambridge (UK) will be followed by another meeting in Nairobi, Kenya. "The biodiversity profile will be a rapid assessment of biological priorities and the underlying causes of biodiversity loss in the hotspot", said Pierre Carret (Grant Director for CEPF). Preparation of the Ecosystem Profile will be undertaken on behalf of CEPF by BirdLife International and Conservation International using similar approaches for the Mediterranean and Caribbean hotspots completed in 2010.

Sources: BirdLife International blog, October 2010; World Birdwatch *32(4), p. 6*

Vultures declining rapidly in the Masai Mara

Researchers have found that vulture populations, including African White-backed *Gyps africanus*, Rüppell's *G. reuppellii* and Hooded *Necrosyrtes monachus*, around the Masai Mara National Reserve in south-west Kenya have declined by up to 60% over three decades. The primary causes are changes in land use and other human activity, particularly the poisoning of livestock carcasses intended to kill large predators. Vultures quickly die after scavenging on the tainted carcasses. It is speculated that the situation there might mirror that throughout eastern Africa. Another recently published study showed similar trends, revealing declines of 70% for scavenging birds, primarily vultures, over a three-year period in central Kenya. Again poisoned bait was apparently responsible. In many areas, livestock owners misuse the pesticide Furadan to poison lions and other large predators that kill their livestock. Paul Matiku, Executive Director of NatureKenya said: "if the use of Furadan and other chemicals like Dichlophenac are not removed from the Kenyan market, Kenya is likely to not only lose [its] entire vulture populations and other target species". With funding from the Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation, over 2,000 posters have been produced to raise awareness of the threat to vultures, and coordinated counts are being undertaken in East Africa to verify the extent of the problem and make recommendations for mitigation.

Source: BirdLife International press release, December 2010

Indian Ocean Islands

Not one but two new mammals discovered in Madagascar?

Just months after Alaotra Grebe *Tachybaptus rufolavatus*, a bird last seen in 1985, was declared extinct (*cf. Bull. ABC* 17: 151), a new species of carnivore has been described from the same area of northern Madagascar. Durrell's Vontsira *Salanoia durrelli*, which was named in honour of the late Gerald Durrell, was first photographed in Lake Alaotra in 2004. Subsequent surveys by scientists at the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, the Natural History Museum, London, Nature Heritage, Jersey, and Conservation International have confirmed the mongoose-like animal is a new species. Previously, it had been assumed that the sightings involved Brown-tailed Vontsira *S. concolor*, a forest-based species that is also endemic to Madagascar. Durrell's Vontsira is the first new carnivore to be discovered in Madagascar for 24 years, but its future survival is already deemed uncertain. Sedimentation from deforested watersheds, pollution from pesticides and fertilizers, and burning and agricultural conversion of the lake's reedbeds have left the lake's ecosystem in dire straights. Madagascar is, of course, famous above all for its lemurs and additional exciting mammal news from the island involves a potentially new species of lemur. First spotted in 1995, by Russ Mittermeier, a new population of *Phaner* fork-marked lemur in the forests of Daraina, in north-east Madagascar, looks set to be described as a new species in due course; genetic work is currently in progress.

Sources: Systematics & Biodiversity *8, pp. 341–355; http://www.durrell.org/Latest/News/; http://news.bbc.co.uk/earth/hi/earth_news/newsid_9277000/9277717.stm*

Southern Africa

Extension to Gorongosa National Park

The Mozambique government has announced the official inclusion of Mount Gorongosa into Gorongosa National Park. The decision came as the park, located in central Mozambique, celebrated its 50th anniversary. The inclusion forms part of the ongoing Gorongosa Restoration Project, which aims to restore the park's ecosystem as well as develop an ecotourism industry with the aim of benefiting the surrounding communities. The Gorongosa Restoration Project is supported by an US non-profit organisation, the Carr Foundation, which has signed a 20-year contract with local government to co-manage the park. Future plans include training and a more efficient anti-poaching team, upgrades to park infrastructure, as well as the creation of a dedicated research centre. In a speech at the anniversary celebrations, Greg Carr of the Carr Foundation said: "We now recognise that a national park must help the human beings who live around it and not only preserve nature. The 20 'public-private partnership' for the co-management of Gorongosa's restoration provides us with a mandate to pursue the dual objectives of human development and biodiversity protection. Indeed, anyone who excludes one goal or the other from their perspective is missing the point about the interconnectedness of the two." Gorongosa National Park's Forestry & Mountain Manager, Pedro Muagura, is working with the communities who live on the mountain. As part of the community engagement project, Muagura and a team of 60 residents are helping to educate as many people in the area as possible on the importance of trees to the watershed and the long-term health of the mountain.

J. Davison in litt. *to Africa Birding, September 2001*

Oldest Levaillant's Cisticola

A Levaillant's Cisticola *Cisticola tinniens*, ringed as an adult at Rondevlei Nature Reserve in Cape Town, South Africa, on 8 February 2003, was recaptured at the same site on 9 October 2010. The bird has been recaptured here several times (see http://afring.adu.org.za/m3/retrap_process.php?ringno=GA70176&inscription=SAFRING). The elapsed time between ringing and last recapture was 2,800 days, or seven years and eight months, making this the oldest Levaillant's Cisticola in SAFRING's database.

Source: BirdLife South Africa E-newsletter *November 2010, p. 8*

Levaillant's Cisticola / Cisticole à sonnette *Cisticola tinniens* (Hugh Chittenden)

Taxonomic proposals

The BSC made more transparent and user-friendly?

Given that species remain the fundamental operational units of biology, ecology and conservation, numerous techniques using molecular or phenotypic data have been devised to overcome the problem of what constitutes a species? Given ongoing problems of subjectivity, particularly in applying the Biological Species Concept, Joe Tobias and his colleagues have produced a long-awaited series of new guidelines for assessing species rank, based on the use of divergence between undisputed sympatric species as a yardstick for determining the taxonomic status of allopatric forms. Using multiple phenotypic characters, including biometrics, plumage and voice, they assessed mean levels of divergence among 58 sympatric or parapatric species-pairs belonging to 29 avian families. From these, the authors went on to develop criteria for species delimitation based on data-driven thresholds. Their preliminary tests show that these criteria result in relatively few changes to avian taxonomy in Europe, yet are capable of extensive reassignment of species limits in poorly known tropical regions. Tobias *et al.* argue that their system can be applied more objectively to the global avifauna to deliver a taxonomy marked out by high levels of consistency and transparency. It is worth remarking that one of the examples chosen by these authors for analysis was that provided by the two crimson-winged finches, *Rhodopechys sanguineus* (of Asia) and *R.* (*s.*) *alienus* (from north-west Africa), a subject already addressed by a paper in this Bulletin (*Bull. ABC* 13: 136–146). The proposed split into a principally Asian and a north-west African species was upheld using the new guidelines.

Source: Ibis *152, pp. 724–746*

Crab-plover is closely related to coursers and pratincoles

A recent study by Sergio Pereira and Allan Baker, based on anatomical and molecular characters of 22 shorebird genera, found that the molecular data strongly suggest that the monotypic Crab-plover *Dromas ardeola* is closely related to the coursers and pratincoles (Glareolidae). This agrees with previously published DNA-DNA hybridisation studies. The analysis of anatomical characters, on the other hand, did not resolve the phylogenetic relationship of shorebirds with strong statistical support.

Source: Genetics & Molecular Biology *33, pp. 583–586*

Crab-plover / Drome ardéole *Dromas ardeola* (Jon Hornbuckle)

Should Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater be treated as a monotypic species?

This is the question recently posed by Don Turner, who following a brief discussion of the available evidence recommends that (until genetic data become available) Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater *Merops oreobates* is best considered a subspecies of *Merops lafresnayii*. The latter has, itself, been generally regarded as a subspecies of Blue-breasted Bee-eater *M. variegatus* for much of the last 50 years. Turner considers that it would be better to treat *variegatus* as a species apart, based on clear habitat and vocal differences, and to lump *oreobates* and *lafresnayii*, with the latter name having specific priority.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl. *130, pp. 228–229*

Muscicapidae in the spotlight

Two recent phylogenies of the Old World chats and flycatchers (Muscicapidae) have both revealed many currently constituted genera to be polyphyletic. The first, by Dario Zuccon and Per Ericson, found five genera—*Muscicapa*, *Copsychus*, *Thamnolaea*, *Luscinia* and *Ficedula*—to be so comprised. They also found European Robin *Erithacus rubecula* to be nestled within a clade of otherwise exclusively Afrotropical forest robins (e.g. genera *Pseudalethe*, *Cossypha* and *Pogonocichla*), quite apart from other *Erithacus* species from Asia. The second study, by George Sangster *et al.*, recovered a similar but not identical result for this species. In consequence, the latter authors recommend that the East Asian *Erithacus* be transferred to the genus *Larvivora*. However, in other respects, the two studies differ in their conclusions with respect to some African taxa. For instance, Sangster *et al.* found that the taxonomically intriguing Buff-streaked Chat *Campicoloides bifasciatus* should be submerged within *Oenanthe*, whereas Zuccon & Ericson preferred to maintain its monotypic genus status. Furthermore, Sangster and his colleagues recommend transferring the entire constituents of the genera *Cercomela* and *Myrmecocichla*, as well as Mocking Cliff Chat *Thamnolaea cinnamomeiventris* to the wheatears *Oenanthe* as well. Zuccon & Ericson also recovered evidence of a close relationship between these taxa, but in contrast appear to prefer maintenance of the traditional taxonomy at generic level. However, they do propose removing White-winged Cliff Chat *Thamnolaea semirufa* to the rock thrushes *Monticola*. Among other dichotomous results, Zuccon & Ericson suggest that the genus *Muscicapa* might be polyphyletic, with Spotted Flycatcher *M. striata* (a winter visitor to Africa) and Brown-breasted Flycatcher *M. muttui* (of exclusively Asian distribution) apparently belonging to a separate lineage, whereas Sangster *et al.* recovered a monophyletic *Muscicapa*. On the other hand, Sangster *et al.* also suggest that the genus *Cercotrichas* (scrub robins) as currently constituted might well prove to be polyphyletic, but prefer to await further data before removing some species to other genera. Finally, both sets of results support removing Brown-chested Alethe *Alethe poliocephala* to *Pseudalethe*, in line with the earlier findings of Pamela Beresford.

Sources: Zool. Scripta *39, pp. 213–224;* Mol. Phyl. & Evol. *57, pp. 380–392*

Race *collaris* of White-headed Black Chat is a valid taxon

The Tanzanian endemic race *collaris* of White-headed Black Chat *Myrmecocichla arnotti* was first described by Reichenow in 1882. It was found to differ from the nominate race in that the female possesses a complete white collar. However, due to a lack of knowledge about the development of adult plumage, the distributional range, and the absence of diagnostic features among males of the different White-headed Black Chat races, *collaris* specimens were generally considered aberrant, and the name largely disappeared from the literature. Results of morphological and molecular analyses, and field observations, by Robert Glen and co-workers now suggest *collaris* is indeed a valid taxon, which occurs west of the Eastern Arc and southern Tanzanian highlands, extending into eastern Congo-Kinshasa, Burundi, Rwanda (Akagera area), northern Zambia and possibly northern Malaŵi.

Source: J. Ornithol. *DOI 10.1007/s10336–010–0548–2*

Proposed split of Spotted Creeper

Spotted Creeper *Salpornis spilonotus* is currently considered to comprise five subspecies, four in Africa and one in India. Based on morphological and molecular characters, and vocalisations, Dieter Tietze and Jochen Martens propose to treat African and Indian populations as two different species, *Salpornis salvadori* and *S. spilonotus*. The Indian Spotted Creepers differ from all African populations in their external body measurements, especially the bill–wing ratio. The genetic divergence, based however on a very limited sample of two specimens of subspecies *salvadori* and a single one of nominate *spilonotus*, is considered to be 'strikingly high'. The authors estimate that the two taxa last shared a common ancestor up to nine million years ago.
The proposed split is considered 'preliminary' and additional molecular and bioacoustic evidence is needed to establish the relationships between the four African taxa.

Source: Vert. Zool. *60, pp. 163–170*

New family name for Madagascar's endemic 'warblers'

Recent molecular studies have revealed that Madagascar's endemic 'warblers' form a distinct sylvioid radiation. The species of this group exhibit a great variety of bill shapes, wing and tail proportions, and tarsus lengths. This morphological diversity is linked to varieties of habitat and prey favoured by these insectivorous forest birds. Although several authors considered these species to form a separate family, for which they used the name 'Bernieridae', this name was not correctly introduced according to the provisions of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature*. This situation has now been rectified in a paper by Alice Cibois *et al.* The ten species that comprise the Bernieridae are Long-billed Bernieria (Common Tetraka) *Bernieria madagascariensis*, Short-billed Tetraka *Xanthomixis zosterops*, Grey-crowned Tetraka *X. cinereiceps*, Appert's Tetraka *X. apperti*, Dusky Tetraka *X. tenebrosa*, White-throated Oxylabes *Oxylabes madagascariensis*, Thamnornis *Thamnornis chloropetoides*, Madagascar Yellowbrow (Yellow-browed Oxylabes) *Crossleyia xanthophrys*, Wedge-tailed Jery *Hartertula flavoviridis* and Cryptic Warbler *Cryptosylvicola randrianasoloi*. Another endemic passerine, not yet studied, *Randia pseudozosterops* (Rand's Warbler), could be a possible addition to this group. The Malagasy endemic 'warblers' that do not belong to the Bernieridae are the three *Neomixis* species (Common Jery *N. tenella*, Green Jery *N. viridis*, Stripe-throated Jery *N. striatigula*), which were shown to be embedded in the Cisticolidae, and Madagascar Brush Warbler *Nesillas typica*.

Source: Zootaxa *2554, pp. 65–68*

Whither lies Neumann's Warbler?

Meanwhile, other genetic data have provided some evidence as to the correct placement of an 'aberrant' Albertine Rift endemic. Martin Irestedt *et al.* have presented molecular data that Neumann's Warbler *Hemitesia neumanni* is deeply nested within the Cettiidae, an intriguing discovery, given that the family is principally an Asian radiation. This disjunct distribution could be a result of colonisation of Africa by long-distance dispersal, or represent evidence that the Cettiidae may formerly have had a much larger geographical distribution that also included parts of Africa.

Source: Ibis *DOI: 10.1111/j.1474-919X.2010.01084.x*

Neumann's Warbler / Crombec de Neumann *Hemitesia neumanni* (Glen Valentine / Rockjumper Birding Tours)

Internet resources

Niger Bird DataBase website

A bilingual Niger Bird Database website ('NiBDaB') can be accessed at http://www.bromus.net/nibdab. This site aims to promote the knowledge and conservation of the birds of Niger. Georeferenced and dated observations can be entered, analysed and shown on maps with a few clicks of the mouse and minimal typing. The site can also be used to call up site and block lists, and to find where to look for certain species. The file 'About NiBDaB' on the site contains information on how to use, and contribute to, the NiBDaB.

At present the database holds 25,900 records of 456 species from 130 half-degree blocks in Niger. Additional data are expected to be uploaded soon. The site also contains a checklist of the birds of Niger, a facility for uploading bird pictures from Niger, a list of ornithological references relevant to Niger, and links relevant to the birds of Niger.

Contributed by Joost Brouwer

Zambia resources

Three new resources are now available as free downloads at either the ABC or Zambian Ornithological Society (ZOS) websites (http://www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/Zambia/refs.html; http://wattledcrane.com/content/data.shtml). The first is the most up-to-date ZOS checklist for the country and the second is a spreadsheet containing checklists for every Zambian national park and Important Bird Area. Both will be updated periodically. The third is a .pdf file of Tauraco Research Report No. 9 (2009) *A Contribution to the Ornithology of Zambia* edited by Robert J. Dowsett. This is a companion publication to *The Birds of Zambia* by Dowsett *et al.* (2008) and its contents are as follows: (1) The resident birds of Zambia: additional data on distribution and status by R. J. Dowsett, (2) Palearctic migrants in Zambia by R. J. Dowsett, (3) Intra-African migrants in Zambia by R. J. Dowsett & P. M. Leonard, (4) Annotated lists of the birds of Zambia's national parks by R. J. Dowsett & P. M. Leonard, and (5) Recent additions to the bird checklists of Zambian Important Bird Areas by P. M. Leonard.

Contributed by Pete Leonard

Satellite tracking at WAOS

The satellite-tracking overview pages on the website of the West African Ornithological Society (http://malimbus.free.fr) have been updated recently. New links via which you can follow birds that are in Africa or which could migrate there include the following species and countries of origin: Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* (Netherlands), White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* (Hungary), Short-toed Snake Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* (Italy), Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* (Romania), Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor* (Oman), Common Crane *Grus grus* (Finland) and Sociable Lapwing *Vanellus gregarius* (Kazakhstan).

Contributed by Peter Browne & Joost Brouwer

New e-journal

Ornithological Observations (*OO*) is a new semi-scientific e-journal published by the Animal Demography Unit, University of Cape Town and BirdLife South Africa. The first volume is currently online and a number of articles have already been published that cover interesting bird observations, research or happenings mainly in South and southern Africa. All papers on the *OO* site are downloadable as .pdf files, at http://oo.adu.org.za/content.php?vol=1. Contributions from outside of southern Africa are also welcomed.

Contributed by Doug Harebottle

The 2012 Pan-African Ornithological Congress

At the 12th Pan-African Ornithological Congress (PAOC), held in South Africa in 2008, Nigeria was chosen as the host country for the 2012 congress. Preparations for PAOC 13 are now well underway. Jos, on the central plateau, will be the site for the congress, which will be held on 14–21 October 2012. Excellent conference facilities are available, but accommodation will be better suited to ornithologists' budgets than in big cities. Delegates from Europe and North Africa can fly to Abuja, a bus drive from Jos. Those coming from the south will need a connecting flight from Lagos; there is a good daily service. Nigeria is currently not a tourist destination, but it supports a wide range of habitats from coastal rain forest to the arid Sahel. Proposed tours linked to the congress will include the south-east highlands of the Obudu Plateau, where Grey-necked Picathartes *Picathartes oreas* breeds and other montane forest species occur. North of Jos lies Yankari Game Reserve, with both large mammals and a wide range of birds. There is also a wildfowl reserve at Dagona, where many migrant waterbirds congregate, while nearer Lagos the grounds of the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture offer a glimpse of the coastal rain forests. Chair of the Local Organising Committee for PAOC 13 is Dr Shiiwua Manu (e-mail: manushiiwua@yahoo.co.uk) and the BirdLife office in East Africa is hosting the congress website.

Adrian Craig

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Stop wishing, start packing!

Some bird distributional limits in the Upper Zambezi Valley

R. J. Dowsett[a], C. A. Brewster[b] and C. Hines[c]

Limites de distribution de certaines espèces d'oiseaux dans la Vallée du Zambèze Supérieur. Cet article documente les limites de l'aire de distribution de certaines espèces d'oiseaux dans la Vallée du Zambèze Supérieur, une région où quatre pays se rencontrent (la Zambie, la Namibie, le Botswana et le Zimbabwe). Certaines de ces espèces sont en train d'étendre leur aire de distribution vers le nord, et d'autres pourraient le faire dans un avenir plus ou moins proche, comme la région connaît une sécheresse croissante. Il est donc important de préciser les limites des distributions actuelles. Nous prenons l'occasion de corriger un certain nombre d'erreurs dans la littérature, apparues dans Harrison *et al.* (1997) et Hockey *et al.* (2005).

Summary. This article documents the ranges of bird species which have distributional limits in the Upper Zambezi Valley, an area where four countries come together (Zambia, Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe). Some of these birds are expanding their ranges, and others may be expected to do so in future, as the region experiences increasing drought; it is thus important to document present distributions. The opportunity is taken to correct a number of errors that have appeared in the literature.

In preparing the text of *The Birds of Zambia* (Dowsett *et al.* 2008) attention was paid to the occurrence of species south of the Zambezi in northern Namibia and Botswana and north-west Zimbabwe for which there are no reports further north. In their analysis of bird distributions on either side of the major valleys in the southern half of Africa, Benson *et al.* (1962) demonstrated that there are notably more species for which the Zambezi may be the southern limit, than those for which it is the northern. They stressed that distribution in this region is mostly influenced by vegetational factors. Benson *et al.* (1962) studied the situation in the Middle and Upper Zambezi Valleys, especially the former, from below the Victoria Falls to Feira (now called Luangwa) town. Here we examine mainly at the situation in the Upper Zambezi Valley (above the Victoria Falls), updating what is known of the ranges of relevant species. The river here forms the boundary between Zambia to the north, and Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia to the south. There is no miombo (*Brachystegia–Julbernadia*) woodland *s.s.* in northern Namibia, northern Botswana and the Caprivi (White 1983, Cizek in prep.), although there are isolated *Brachystegia spiciformis* trees in the eastern Caprivi, just west of Katima Mulilo (CH pers. obs.). Instead (as explained by Benson & Irwin 1966) *Baikiaea* forest or woodland does extend there.

In considering records for these last three countries mapped in the Southern African Atlas (Harrison *et al.* 1997), we have found a surprising number of apparently erroneous reports included, and some omissions (a complaint also made by Hustler 1998). We have attempted to trace full details of each through the original atlas data, but unfortunately many of these data are not accessible (CAB & CH pers. obs.). As noted by Tyler *et al.* (2008), there are a number of errors elsewhere in the southern African literature, especially in Hockey *et al.* (2005). We have also examined the Namibia Bird Atlas maps at www.biodiversity.org.na/birds/birdatlas.php (accessed 10 September 2008). These are in most cases based solely on Harrison *et al.* (1997)—although the maps lack coordinates, so it is difficult to judge—and rarely are there any supporting details in the associated Namibian Biodiversity Database. We consider it to be particularly important to clarify species distributions in this part of south-west Africa, as the region is experiencing a decrease in rainfall, and some bird species have recently spread north in Botswana (this paper) and into southern Zambia (Dowsett *et al.* 2008: 3–5).

Unless another reference is given, all statements relating to Zambian distribution are based on Dowsett *et al.* (2008), and those relating to Botswana and Namibia to CAB and CH respectively. A gazetteer includes all localities not already traced in Dowsett *et al.* (2008: 533–555).

Initials are used to indicate the observers of unpublished records: DRA = D. R. Aspinwall; CB = C. Beel; MB = M. Boorman; SB = S. Braine; CAB = C. A. Brewster; RJD = R. J. Dowsett; CH = C. Hines; NDH = N. D. Hunter; RM = R. McDougall; MP = M. Paxton; EHP = E. H. Penry; RDR = R. D. Randall; IR = I. Riddell; CS

= C. Sharpe; RS = R. Stjernstedt; AJT = A. J. Tree; SJT = S. J. Tyler.

Species unknown south of the Upper Zambezi, with their southern limit in this area in southern Zambia

We consider here those species that range south to at least 16°S.

Black-cheeked Lovebird *Agapornis nigrigenis*
Its occurrence south of the Zambezi is unproven. Ranges in **Zambia** south to between Mulobezi and Sesheke. Several reports in **Namibia** from the Katima Mulilo area, most recently 'a single record of a group of chattering lovebirds recorded at Lianshulu by the forester at the time could possibly have been this species (*per* SB), but there is an escaped population of Rosy-faced Lovebirds *A. roseicollis* (including hybrids) in Katima Mulilo itself, often seen around the old golf course. Any claimed record of wild Black-cheeked Lovebird (a species of conservation concern) requires careful documentation. It has been stated to occur irregularly in north-west **Zimbabwe** (G. R. Thomson *per* M. P. S. Irwin *in litt.* 1971; Irwin 1981), but this demands confirmation.

Böhm's Bee-eater *Merops boehmi*
Does not occur south of 16°S in western **Zambia**, but included here as a sight record was claimed well to the south from the Victoria Falls: details were never published, and it cannot be accepted (Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1979). However, exceptionally an adult was photographed outside its normal range at Lochinvar, on 27 April 1990 (RM), and the possibility of further vagrancy cannot be excluded.

Pale-billed Hornbill *Tockus pallidirostris*
In **Zambia** does not reach the Upper Zambezi, occurring south only to *c.*16°30'S (Nawinda and Simamba: Dowsett *et al.* 2008). Unknown from the teak forests south of the Zambezi.

Miombo Pied Barbet *Tricholaema frontata*
In **Zambia**, west of the Zambezi south to Cholola (DRA, CB), thence east to the Zambezi at Livingstone, hybridising with Acacia Pied Barbet *T. leucomelas* in this last area.

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*
In **Zambia** the local race (*emini*) of this rock-associated species has exceptionally wandered as far south as the Lusitu stream on the Zambezi escarpment in March. Vagrants have occurred in **Zimbabwe** near Harare at the same season (Irwin 1981). A March sight report from Hwange National Park (Hustler *et al.* 1992) is unlikely to have been *emini*, as the observers do not mention the best feature for separating this bird from other red-rumped swallows of all ages, the dark blue undertail-coverts, and *C. daurica emini* is quite a large swallow, not small as described. However, the possibility of Palearctic *rufula* cannot be ruled out, as one has reached Zambia (van den Brink & Leonard 2011).

Miombo Scrub Robin *Erythropygia barbata*
In **Zambia** it occurs only just south of 16°S, to the Sonso River, being absent from miombo and *Baikiaea* towards the Zambezi.

Sooty Chat *Myrmecocichla nigra*
Although it occurs in **Zambia** throughout most of the Southern Province plateau to just north of the Zambezi at Senkobo, it is absent from the south-west and is unknown in **Botswana** and **Namibia**.

African Yellow Warbler *Chloropeta natalensis*
In **Zambia** it ranges sparsely south to near Livingstone. Reappears marginally in south-eastern **Botswana**, in the Gaborone area (Tyler *et al.* 2008). In the Middle Zambezi in **Zimbabwe**, probably as a winter visitor, it occurs no further west than Chirundu and 1628C (K. Barnes *in* Harrison *et al.* 1997).

Yellow-bellied Hyliota *Hyliota flavigaster*
In **Zambia** essentially absent south of 17°S, although exceptionally it has been reported from the Chijalile Hills on the Zambezi escarpment. A sight record from the Victoria Falls in **Zimbabwe**, on 9 September (Pollard 2003), could be no more than an exceptional wanderer (Dowsett 2004)—the first records of egg laying in Zambia are in that month. Another sighting of a hyliota west of the Victoria Falls could not be identified to species (Mundy 1989).

Southern Hyliota *Hyliota australis*
Absent from south-west **Zambia**, reaching only the Chajilele Hills area on the Zambezi escarpment. Does not enter north-west **Zimbabwe** (a claim from Zambezi National Park, west of Victoria Falls, was not accepted: Hustler 1989), although present on the central plateau (Irwin 1981).

Short-winged Cisticola *Cisticola brachypterus*
Although in **Zambia** it reaches Livingstone, near the north bank of the Zambezi, it is unknown south of the river in **Namibia**, **Botswana** or north-west **Zimbabwe**.

Böhm's Flycatcher *Muscicapa boehmi*
This miombo endemic occurs in **Zambia** south only to Mushukula at 17°S.

White-tailed Blue Flycatcher *Elminia albicauda*
In **Zambia** it does not occur south of 16°40'S, at Kabuzu Pool.

Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher *Trochocercus cyanomelas*
In **Zambia** it does not occur south of 14°S. Mentioned here because of a sight record from the **Zimbabwe** side of Victoria Falls, considered reliable by Irwin (1981), and another sighting claimed by the same observer at Kariba town (Donnelly & Donnelly 1983: 42). A subsequent report from Victoria Falls was rejected (Hustler 1989), and there is no other record within several hundred km (all acceptable Zimbabwe records are from east of 30°E). M. P. S. Irwin (*in litt.* 1971) wrote that its occurrence in dry thicket behind the rain forest at Victoria Falls was confirmed by B. Thompson, but we believe this requires verification, especially in view of the numerous observers (some resident) who have never found it on either bank of the Zambezi.

White-winged Black Tit *Parus leucomelas*
In **Zambia** it ranges south along the Zambezi escarpment to near Senkobo, but it does not reach **Botswana**, and is unknown from **Zimbabwe**.

Violet-backed Sunbird *Anthreptes longuemarei*
Marginally south in **Zambia** to the Zambezi at Livingstone, but absent further west, and unknown in north-west **Zimbabwe** and **Botswana**.

Yellow-mantled Widowbird *Euplectes macroura*
In **Zambia** it occurs along the Zambezi to Mambova, but it is unknown in adjacent north-west **Zimbabwe** and **Botswana**.

Cardinal Quelea *Quelea cardinalis*
Absent from southern and western **Zambia**, but listed here as reports have been published claiming it from the south bank of the Zambezi above Victoria Falls: these records reflected confusion with Red-headed Quelea *Q. erythrops* (Hustler & Pollard 1995). It has, however, been found on the **Zimbabwe** side of the Middle Zambezi at Mana Pools (Varden 1999a).

Bully Canary *Serinus sulphuratus*
Very scarce in southern **Zambia**, barely reaching the Zambezi, and does not occur in **Botswana** or north-west **Zimbabwe**.

Stripe-breasted Seedeater *Serinus reichardi*
In **Zambia** it barely reaches the Livingstone area (Dambwa Forest), and it does not occur south of the Zambezi—the record from **Zimbabwe** attributed to this species by Chappuis (2000) being in error for Streaky-headed Seedeater *S. gularis* (Dowsett-Lemaire 2002).

Species which range marginally southwards into northern Botswana, Namibia and north-west Zimbabwe west of Victoria Falls

Crested Guineafowl *Guttera pucherani*
Ranges throughout south-west **Zambia**, south to Imusho on the Mashi (Benson & Irwin 1967), east along the north bank of the Zambezi River, exceptionally to Chundu near Livingstone (RS *in* Anon. 1998). South of the Zambezi it is known marginally in **Namibia**, from west of Katima Mulilo and on the Kwando River (Kemp 1971), on Impalila Island and one of the small Zambian islands directly to the north (Hines *et al.* 1997). During 1988/89 it was only recorded twice, once near the present turn-off to Namushasha and a second time in dense bush north of Nukwa in the forestry area. S. Mayes recorded a single bird always in association with a group of Impala *Aepyceros melampus* on the Kwando-Mashi (*per* SB). In **Botswana** there is just one record, at Mowana Lodge, Kasane (Tyler *et al.* 2008), and

the species ranges north in north-west **Zimbabwe** to Kazuma Pan and western Matetsi (Irwin 1981).

Schalow's Turaco *Tauraco schalowi*
Occurs throughout **Zambia**, south to the Upper Zambezi (including Victoria Falls) and Mashi Rivers. There are three records from northern **Botswana** (Tyler *et al.* 2008; *per* CAB), and it occurs along the south bank of the Zambezi in north-west **Zimbabwe** (Irwin 1981). In **Namibia** it is a relatively common species in and around Katima Mulilo in riparian fringe woodlands.

Purple-creasted Turaco *Tauraco porphyreolophus*
In **Zambia** it is absent from the Zambezi Valley upriver from Lake Kariba, as is the case in north-west **Zimbabwe** (Irwin 1981). Astonishingly, it has been seen in northern **Botswana** in the Kasane area, from where there are two sightings probably involving the same bird (Tyler *et al.* 2008).

Ross's Turaco *Musophaga rossae*
Does not occur south of 16°S in western **Zambia**, but mentioned here as there is a single enigmatic specimen from Ikoga in the north-west Okavango Delta, **Botswana** (Tyler *et al.* 2008), as well as some unconfirmed reports.

Racket-tailed Roller *Coracias spatulatus*
Throughout southern and south-west **Zambia**, in dry miombo woodland and *Baikiaea* teak. Occurs locally in northern **Botswana**, south to Moremi (Bushell 1987) and west to the Tsodilo Hills (Penry 1994). In **Namibia** widespread in the eastern Caprivi, west well into former Owambo (at least to near Eenhana on the Angolan border, north of Oshakati). Also occurs well south into Kaudom Game Reserve and north-west of Tsumkwe in former Bushmanland (Hines 1987, 1996; CH pers. obs.). Ranges in **Zimbabwe** to the Nampini area (Irwin 1981).

Crowned Hornbill *Tockus alboterminatus*
Widespread through most of the Upper Zambezi in **Zambia**. There is a single record (breeding) in northern **Botswana**, at Kasane (Tyler *et al.* 2008), but according to Hustler (1998) not west of Victoria Falls in **Zimbabwe**. In **Namibia** reasonably common just west of Katima Mulilo; there are isolated reports from the Caprivi Strip further west to the Okavango but we consider these to require confirmation.

Olive Woodpecker *Mesopicos griseocephalus*
In southern **Zambia** it is rare south of 16°S, but a small population has been found on the Zambezi upriver from Victoria Falls, and in immediately adjacent **Zimbabwe** (Varden 1991). In **Botswana** it is known from dense riparian forest near Kasane (Tyler *et al.* 2008; CH pers. obs.), and the species is regular on Impalila Island. In **Namibia** there are ringing records from the Katima Mulilo area (MB *et al.*) and Kemp (1971) collected specimens on an island 2 km downriver of Katima Mulilo.

Black Saw-wing *Psalidoprocne pristoptera*
Vagrants attributable to the race *reichenowi* have been recorded in southern **Zambia** from the Zambezi at Sesheke and Kafwambila, and the race *orientalis* at Katombora (Dowsett 2009). For **Namibia**, R. A. Earlé *in* Harrison *et al.* (1997) has a plot in square 1724C, on the basis that the race *reichenowi* 'has been recorded from the Caprivi Strip' (Clancey 1980), but this referred to the specimen from near Sesheke (1724A), and to the possibility only that it occurs also in the Caprivi and along the Okavango River. This is presumably the origin of the single, undocumented, plot in the Namibia Bird Atlas (under *P. holomelas*). A sighting of two in **Botswana** at Shakawe, on 27 August 1987 (Penry 1994: 294, Brewster & Major 2002: 60, Tyler *et al.* 2008) probably also refers to this race. This is the only acceptable record south of the Zambezi above Victoria Falls, but there are regular sightings of *P. p. reichenowi* wintering in the Middle Zambezi Valley in **Zimbabwe** (e.g. Nyakasanga / Zambezi confluence; IR).

Angola Swallow *Hirundo angolensis*
In **Zambia**, quite unknown south of 14°S, reaching only the Copperbelt. However, a sighting has been accepted from the Kwando (Mashi) River in northern **Botswana** (Tyler *et al.* 2008), doubtless involving wanderers from the Angolan population. In the past, the species was claimed from the Caprivi Strip in **Namibia** (Vincent 1952), this presumably being the record repeated by Brown (1990). There is good reason to suppose this was a misidentified Barn Swallow *H. rustica*, as was clearly the case with a claim

from the Transvaal (Farkas 1962). However, there are reliable records from the north-central area (Oshikango, where it was found breeding on a storage building by Cardwell) and on the Kunene River near Ruacana. Reported by M. du Plessis and D. Verwoerd *c.*90 km north of Ruacana in Angola (*per* CH).

Eastern Nicator *Nicator gularis*
In **Zambia**, southwards throughout the Middle Zambezi Valley, and upriver from Victoria Falls as far as Sioma. Not recorded in **Namibia** by T. B. Oatley (*in* Harrison *et al.* 1997), nor in the Namibia Bird Atlas, but it has been recorded in riparian woodland and scrub at Katima Mulilo (*CS*) and in *Commiphora karibensis* scrub thickets on Impalila Island, while there is also a report from the Kwando (Mashi) River area near Kongola (not yet substantiated). In **Zimbabwe** it ranges south-west to square 1826D (Riddell 1998b). Not yet reported from **Botswana**.

Red-capped Robin Chat *Cossypha natalensis*
Common locally along the Zambezi in **Zambia** above the Victoria Falls. In **Botswana** there is just a single record, from Kasane (1725C: Tyler *et al.* 2008) and in north-west **Zimbabwe** it occurs at Kazungula (1725C: Pollard 2001a). Although Pollard gave square 1725C as the only Zambian one on the Zambezi above Victoria Falls, it is in fact known from all squares west to Imusho. There are nine plots in the **Namibia** Bird Atlas, in the Caprivi Strip west to *c.*21°30'E, which is presumably Andara, where the species was recorded by Hines (1996).

Collared Palm Thrush *Cichladusa arquata*
Occurs locally along the Zambezi in **Zambia** between Livingstone and Kazungula. In **Botswana** it occurs at several places, from Kasane west to the Okavango and south even to Nata (2026A: Tyler *et al.* 2008). Present on Impalila Island, directly opposite Mowana Lodge (**Namibia**), and in the latter country two have been seen further west in *Hyphaene* thickets in Mahango Game Reserve (CH, MP *et al.*). In north-west **Zimbabwe** the species is widespread in parts of the Middle Zambezi Valley (many observers).

Eastern Bearded Scrub Robin *Erythropygia quadrivirgata*
Ranges throughout southern and south-west **Zambia**. In northern **Botswana** all accepted records are from around Kasane and Ngoma along the Chobe: reports from Shakawe (Pritchard 1998), Maun (Smithers 1964) and the Okavango (Penry 1994) probably involve misidentified White-browed Scrub Robin *E. leucophrys ovamboensis* (*cf.* T. B. Oatley *in* Harrison 1997). In north-west **Zimbabwe** mapped in 1826C; there is some doubt as to the identity of birds in Hwange National Park (Irwin 1998: 237, Riddell 1998a), which may be the more likely Kalahari Scrub Robin *E. paena*. The **Namibia** Bird Atlas has seven plots in the eastern Caprivi, west to *c.*23°30'E.

Miombo Rock Thrush *Monticola angolensis*
In **Zambia**, reaches the Zambezi in the Livingstone area, and thence ranges south in north-west **Zimbabwe** to Hwange National Park (Irwin 1981). In northern **Botswana** it occurs in a small area north of 19°S, south and west to square 1824D (Penry 1994).

Green-capped Eremomela *Eremomela scotops*
Throughout **Zambia** to the Zambezi, and beyond into northern **Botswana** and north-west **Namibia**, south to 20°S (Penry 1994, Hines 1996; Namibia Bird Atlas).

Red-capped Crombec *Sylvietta ruficapilla*
In **Zambia**, ranges south to Kamangoza Sekute near the Zambezi (RJD), and marginally south of the river on Nampini Ranch in north-west **Zimbabwe** (Irwin 1981).

Red-faced Cisticola *Cisticola erythrops*
Common in **Zambia** along the Zambezi, between Livingstone and the Chobe River confluence, but in northern **Botswana** it occurs with certainty only in the Kasane (1725C) and Kabulabula areas (1724D: Smithers 1964). Penry (1994) mapped it in three squares in the Moremi, Okavango area, but A. Berruti (*in* Harrison *et al.* 1997) considered this to be in error, without explanation. Widespread in northern **Zimbabwe**. The **Namibia** Bird Atlas has seven plots in the Caprivi Strip, west to *c.*23°30'E, within Mamili National Park (Hines 1996).

Croaking Cisticola *Cisticola natalensis*
Throughout southern **Zambia**, to the Zambezi. Present in northern **Botswana** south-east to Nogaatsa, Chobe (1824B: Tyler *et al.* 2008). In **Namibia** reported from the eastern Caprivi (Branfield 1990)—though not included in the Namibia Bird Atlas—and widespread in north-west **Zimbabwe**.

Pale-crowned Cisticola *Cisticola cinnamomeus*
The furthest south it occurs in **Zambia** is Kalobelelwa on the Zambezi. In northern **Botswana**, known south to Xugana (1923A) in the Okavango Delta (Tyler *et al.* 2008), but in **Zimbabwe** not in the north-west, only on the central plateau (Irwin 1981).

Miombo Barred Warbler *Camaroptera undosa*
In **Zambia**, present throughout miombo and *Baikiaea* south to the Zambezi. In eastern **Botswana** it is widespread west to 23°E (Penry 1994), and even east of Mohembo (Tyler & Brewster 2009). Present in north-west **Zimbabwe** (Irwin 1981), and in **Namibia** it occurs sparsely through the Caprivi Strip to at least Andara, from where there is a specimen (Clancey 1984). In the latter area it inhabits *Burkea-Terminalia-Pterocarpus* woodland on Kalahari Sand, rather than *Baikiaea* woodland.

Miombo Grey Tit *Parus griseiventris*
In **Zambia** it occurs in woodland upstream of Victoria Falls, and ranges marginally into north-west **Zimbabwe** (Irwin 1981), but not **Botswana**.

Rufous-bellied Tit *Parus rufiventris*
Enters northern **Botswana** from south-west **Zambia** (where local between the Zambezi and the Mashi: Dowsett *et al.* 2008), only in the area west of Shakawe, near the border with Namibia (18°22'S: Tyler *et al.* 2008), but unknown in north-west **Zimbabwe**. In **Namibia** it occurs all along the Botswana border, south from Caprivi Corner to at least the Nhoma omuramba in the southern Kaudom Game Reserve, and west of Rundu (Hines 1996; CH pers. obs.).

Spotted Creeper *Salpornis spilonotus*
Barely reaches the Zambezi in southern **Zambia** and is absent from the south-west of the country, but it has been found once in northern **Botswana** at Kasane, a bird which flew across the Chobe River into **Namibia** (Randall 1994, Tyler *et al.* 2008).

Shelley's Sunbird *Cinnyris shelleyi*
In **Zambia** it occurs south to the Zambezi at Katombora rapids. There are acceptable sight records from two isolated localities in the west, near Kande (Aspinwall 1973) and Lilondo (Beel 1992, Aspinwall 1993). In **Namibia** there are records from Nakatwa Lodge on the Mashi River in the Caprivi (Aspinwall 1993), and several sightings at Katima Mulilo and at Kalizo Lodge, near Kalembeza *c.*25 km east of Katima Mulilo (RDR *et al.*). It has also been seen at Ndhovu Lodge just north of Mahango Game Reserve on the Okavango River (AJT). In northern **Botswana** the species was seen in February 2008 in square 1822B (Brewster 2009). In **Zimbabwe**, known on the Zambezi from Kazungula east (Pollard 2001b).

Sousa's Shrike *Lanius souzae*
Occurs throughout the plateau in **Zambia** east of the Zambezi (south to Cholola), extending further south in *Baikaea* through **Botswana** to Tobera (1822A: Tyler *et al.* 2008) and in **Namibia** to Rundu (1719D: CH) and other sites in the north, where it breeds (M. Paxton *per* SJT). The Namibia Bird Atlas has three (undocumented) plots west to *c.*22°E. Unknown from **Zimbabwe**.

Sharp-tailed Starling *Lamprotornis acuticaudus*
Barely reaches southern **Zambia** in the Sesheke area on the Zambezi, but crosses into northern **Botswana**, north of 19°S and west of 23°30'E (Penry 1994), and appears to be fairly common west and east of Mohembo, along the border (SJT). In **Namibia** reported regularly in small numbers just west of the Kwando River. Uncommon in the Caprivi Strip, but common in the Kaudom Game Reserve and west into former Owambo (*c.*80 km east of Eenhana). Details of some records were given by Hines (1996). There is no confirmed report for **Zimbabwe** (Riddell 2003).

Locust Finch *Paludipasser locustella*
In **Zambia** absent from the region of the Zambezi between Victoria Falls and the Mashi, but in **Botswana** there is a sight record and an old specimen from the Shindi area, Okavango (1923A:

Tyler *et al.* 2008). Does not occur in north-west **Zimbabwe**.

Black-eared Seedeater *Serinus mennelli*
Occurs south in **Zambia** to near the Zambezi at Livingstone, but not to the west. However, it is present in north-west **Zimbabwe** and it is that population which ranges west, south of the river, to 25°E in northern **Botswana**. In **Namibia** a pair was displaying in *Burkea-Pterocarpus-Terminalia* woodland *c.*15 km west of Katima Mulilo.

Species which do not normally occur north of the Upper Zambezi

The following is a list of the species which appear in the Southern African Atlas (Harrison *et al.* 1997) close enough to the Zambezi that they might be expected to occur north of the river, although they were unknown in Zambia at the time of that publication.

Ostrich *Struthio camelus*
Long extinct in western **Zambia**. Wild birds have been reported in recent years no further north in **Botswana** than Lake Ngami, although Penry (1994) mapped them throughout, north to the Zambezi. The **Namibia** Bird Atlas has plots throughout most of the Caprivi Strip, especially the western half, but how recent the records are is unknown.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*
There are no Atlas or other records in the eastern Caprivi area of **Namibia**. Brown (1990) lists it in a paper entitled 'Birds of the West Caprivi Strip'; his records are from the Kavango. However, it has occurred in **Botswana** in recent years north to Kwikamba Pans, Chobe (Brewster 1997) and Maun (*Babbler* 42: 46), and was present in large numbers (some breeding) in February 2000, near Lake Ngami at Mwaku and Tale Pans (Tyler 2001). Thus the species might occur as a vagrant in southern **Zambia**.

South African Shelduck *Tadorna cana*
In **Botswana** normally south of 21°S, exceptionally once north to 1923C (Maun: Flatt *et al.* 2001).

Maccoa Duck *Oxyura maccoa*
In **Namibia** reported, rarely, on the Mashi (Brown 1990) and in the eastern Caprivi (Koen 1988). The species has been recorded on several occasions at Katima Mulilo sewage works (*per* CH), but S. Braine (pers. comm.) never saw it during his time in northern Namibia and no record is plotted in the Caprivi in the Namibia Bird Atlas. In **Botswana**, recorded only from the east, south of 20°S (Sua Pan: Brewster & Tyler 1998). A sighting in central **Zambia** (*Zambian Orn. Soc. Newsletter* 39(7): 5) was a misidentification, probably of Southern Pochard *Netta erythrophthalma* (*Zambian Orn. Soc. Newsletter* 39(8): 1–2).

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*
Rare vagrant in **Botswana**, with four accepted records all south of 20°S (Boteti River: Penry 1994: 291, Tyler *et al.* 2008).

Pale Chanting Goshawk *Melierax canorus*
Two records 'in forest along the Zambezi' from the eastern Caprivi in **Namibia**, according to Koen (1988), but he did not record Dark Chanting Goshawk *M. metabates*, which is a common resident in the area. D. G. Allan *in* Harrison *et al.* (1997) maps two records from the southern Kwando-Linyanti area, but these are also presumed to be in error as little suitable habitat for this species exists in this area. Borello & Borello (1990) reported seeing a juvenile between Kasane and Ngoma bridge (**Botswana**), but without commenting on it being an extension of range or how it was identified.

Smithers (1964) reported that the species was replaced in the Caprivi and northern Okavango by *M. metabates*, and Penry (1994) had only one plot north of 18°30'S, from square 1821B (24 March 1985, NDH, EHP *et al.*; E. H. Penry *in litt.* 2002). There is an 1821C record by P. Comley (27 July 1988) which was not included in the Southern African Atlas (E. H. Penry *in litt.* 2008). CAB lived in Gumare for several years and recorded it in that area south of 19°S (Brewster 1991). It is clearly much scarcer than *M. metabates* in the region, and its exact status and range remain to be determined.

Pygmy Falcon *Polihierax semitorquatus*
Recorded only in the extreme south-west of **Botswana** (Smithers 1964), north to 2420B (Penry 1994), and unknown from Angola (Dean 2000). All observations reported from Botswana since 1994 have been south of 24°30'S. Thus the

sight record in **Namibia** from Liambezi Lake in April (Koen 1988) and the record mapped by A. Jenkins *in* Harrison *et al.* (1997) in square 1821 require confirmation. This species' host, Sociable Weaver *Philetairus socius*, is likewise confined to the extreme south-west and south of Botswana (Penry 1994, Harrison *et al.* 1997). There are also two undocumented plots in the western Caprivi (*c.*1722) in the Namibia Bird Atlas.

Orange River Francolin *Francolinus levaillantoides*

Reported in **Botswana** north only to Nata by Smithers (1964), but north of 19°30'S Penry (1994) plotted it in square 1821A: this is based on an acceptable sighting by R. Nelson (7 August 1987), and it occurs in the Tsodilo Hills (Tyler & Brewster 1999). In **Namibia** it occurs in Mudumu National Park, but is rare (Hines 1996), and R. M. Little & D. G. Allan *in* Harrison *et al.* (1997) map several records in the Atlas, mostly along the Kwando-Mashi River system and in adjacent woodlands. Some of these may be in error; very little suitable habitat exists in that part of the country, this species occupying grassy plains on Kalahari Sand, with the equivalent francolin in wooded areas being Shelley's *F. shelleyi* (Penry 1994).

Blue Crane *Anthropoides paradisea*

Mapped by D. G. Allan *in* Harrison *et al.* (1997) in square 1724A3 (Katima Mulilo), repeated in the **Namibia** Bird Atlas, based on a July sighting that Aspinwall (1988) had already included with records whose accuracy he seriously questioned. In the past recorded rarely as far north as Makarikari (Makgakgadi) Pans, **Botswana** (Penry 1994), where it reportedly bred until 2002 (*per* CAB). The very few recent records in Botswana are from no further north than 2123C (Phokoje Pan: Brewster 2006). The nearest regular population is in Etosha National Park and the surrounding grasslands, at least to the west. The extensive woodlands of the Kalahari Sands do not hold any suitable breeding habitat for the species.

Black Korhaan *Eupodotis afra*

Mapped by Penry (1994) throughout most of **Botswana**, north nearly to 18°S, and there are recent records north to Savuti (18°37'S: Skinner 2001). Suitable habitat (open, tall-grass plains) is lacking in **Zambia** immediately to the north, although the plains west of the Zambezi might have been thought suitable.

Double-banded Courser *Rhinoptilus africanus*

Smithers (1964) recorded it in **Botswana** north only to the Lake Ngami area, but Penry (1994) mapped it as far north as 1823B and even 1724D (Winterbottom & Niven; Botswana Bird Club) and 1725C (Botswana Bird Club) on the border with Zambia. G. Maclean *in* Harrison *et al.* (1997) maps three records (apparently repeated in the **Namibia** Bird Atlas). One is from an area north of the State Forest and east of the Kwando River; the other two are from the Lake Liambezi area and the Chobe River floodplain. All published records in Botswana since 1990 have been from Gumare (19°23'S: Brewster 1991) southwards. It is probable that some of the earlier records claimed were in error for Three-banded Courser *R. cinctus*, which occurs in wooded habitats in the far north. In north-west **Zimbabwe** it occurs in Hwange National Park (Varden 1999b).

Namaqua Sandgrouse *Pterocles namaqua*

A record from the Linyanti swamp system in **Namibia** in May is claimed by Branfield (1990). Recorded as far north in **Botswana** as the Mababe Depression by Smithers (1964), but mapped north to 1821B and 1823B by Penry (1994). There are several additional records shown by R. M. Little *in* Harrison *et al.* (1997), of which details are unknown. Since 1998 the northernmost published record is from 19°S (Qaaxhwa: Tyler & Brewster 2005). Most records for the Caprivi and Kavango regions of Namibia are thought to be in error, and it can be no more than a rare vagrant in the area. In north-west **Zimbabwe** it occurs as a vagrant in Hwange National Park (Hustler 2000).

Speckled (Rock) Pigeon *Columba guinea*

It was only in 2004 that the first of a trickle of invaders appeared in southern **Zambia**, in Livingstone (Dowsett 2009). They have spread north in **Botswana** and are now frequent in Maun (SJT). The species might have been expected to occur in the Middle Zambezi escarpment, judging by the report of Cooper (1972) from the **Zimbabwe** side, which was duly mapped by Harrison *et al.* (1997); however, this record was considered erroneous by Zimbabwean authorities (Hustler 1998).

Rosy-faced Lovebird *Agapornis roseicollis*
Reported as numerous in the eastern Caprivi by Koen (1988), but on what basis is unknown, and the species is not mapped for the Caprivi in the **Namibia** Bird Atlas. There is currently a small flock of escapes and hybrids in the town of Katima Mulilo, but certainly no wild population. Records of wild birds in recent years have all been from the extreme south-west (south of 24°S).

Sabota Lark *Mirafra sabota*
W. R. J. Dean *in* Harrison *et al.* (1997) suggests a wide distribution in the Caprivi (including 1725C & D) and Kavango regions of **Namibia**. Although recorded in **Botswana** north only to Nata by Smithers (1964), this sedentary species was reported north to Kasane by Hunter (1990), and mapped practically throughout by Penry (1994), north to 1724D and 1725C on the Zambian border (and apparently the Victoria Falls area in the Namibia Bird Atlas). In **Zimbabwe** it occurs north to Matetsi (Irwin 1981) and Chamabonda Vlei, near the Victoria Falls (Pollard 1991), and was reportedly seen at Gache Gache near Kariba, in June 1997 (Jones 1997).

W. R. J. Dean (*op. cit.*) had no evidence of seasonal movements, and Hunter (1990) remarked that this is essentially a species in Botswana of the 'eastern hardveld', and only marginal in *Acacia* on Kalahari Sands. So even if most of these sight records are correct, it seems unlikely this lark will be found north of the Zambezi.

Spike-heeled Lark *Chersomanes albofasciata*
A sight record from Victoria Falls National Park in **Zimbabwe** (Jensen 1965) was placed in square brackets (but not specifically rejected) by Irwin (1981). Apart from a specimen claimed from Kundelungu in Katanga, Zaïre (Schouteden 1971) and the isolated population in East Africa (*C. a. beesleyi*, Zimmerman *et al.* 1996), all occurrences in the area we consider here are south of 20°S in **Botswana** (Penry 1994).

Stark's Lark *Eremalauda starki*
There were noticeable influxes into **Botswana** in 2003 and 2007: it was common, with in excess of 1,000 birds, at Dautsa (2022C) in September 2007 (Brewster & Tyler 2008) and there were also three birds at Kazuma Pan (1825B), near the Zimbabwe border, in August 2003 (CAB). It is possible that the species might occasionally reach Zambia, possibly in association with Lark-like Bunting *Emberiza impetuani* (Brewster 2003).

Kalahari Scrub Robin *Erythropygia paena*
Mapped for **Botswana** by T. B. Oatley *in* Harrison *et al.* (1997) in square 1724D, based on a report by Koen (1988), which Aspinwall (1988) had pointed out was probably a misidentification. Similarly recorded by Brown (1990) from both the eastern and western Caprivi. Smithers (1964) reported it north in north-eastern Botswana to Shorobe (1923D), replaced further north by *E. leucophrys*. Penry (1994) mapped it almost throughout, north to 1823A, 1824A and 1824B. Certainly common further west in **Namibia** (Mahango) and along the west bank of the Kwando River (CH pers. obs.) where it is scarce, but not known from the *Baikiaea* woodland west of Katima Mulilo. In **Zimbabwe** there are several reports in Hwange National Park (e.g. Shaw 1997), north to the Deka area (Winterbottom 1971). We believe records in the eastern Caprivi and adjacent Botswana need confirmation.

Southern Ant-eating Chat *Myrmecocichla formicivora*
Occurs in north-west **Botswana** north to 18°30'S (Penry 1994, J. A. Harrison *in* Harrison *et al.* 1997), and in **Zimbabwe** it has twice wandered into the north-west, as far as Westwood (1725C: Irwin 1981). There is a gap between its distribution and that of *M. nigra* in Zambia (see above). In **Namibia** plotted no nearer to Zambia than the western Caprivi.

Red-faced Crombec *Sylvietta whytii*
In **Zimbabwe** it comes no closer to the Middle Zambezi than Main camp, Hwange National Park, and Chirisa Game Reserve (Irwin 1981), and it is unknown in **Botswana**.

Southern Barred Warbler *Camaroptera fasciolata*
M. Herremans *in* Harrison *et al.* (1997) shows several records from the eastern Caprivi, **Namibia** (e.g. 1724C), but these were questioned by Aspinwall (1988), as being possibly in error. Branfield (1989, 1990) reported it, as well as

Miombo Wren-Warbler *C. undosa* (=*stierlingi*), in the eastern Caprivi from M'Pacha, Latala Pan and at Lianshulu on the Mashi. *C. fasciolata* is common in Mahango and at least halfway across the Caprivi Strip (CH). These observations are repeated in the Namibia Bird Atlas, without documentation. In **Botswana**, not recorded north of Lake Dow by Smithers (1964), but in fact common around Lake Ngami (SJT). The largely allopatric *C. undosa* is known from many localities between Kasane and Francistown (Herremans & Herremans 1992). The two species occur almost side by side, but in different habitats, in northern Botswana. *C. fasciolata* occurs in *Acacia*, while *C. undosa* is in broadleaf woodland. The maps in Penry (1994) show quite a lot of overlap, with *C. fasciolata* in the north-east to 1823A, 1824B and 1825A. In **Zimbabwe** there have been a few sightings in Hwange National Park, north to Bejane Pan, where it apparently occurs together with *C. undosa* (English 1992).

Chat Flycatcher *Bradornis infuscatus*
A single Atlas record from the eastern Caprivi, **Namibia** in square 1723D, adjacent to south-west Zambia (M. Herremans *in* Harrison *et al.* 1997) lacks details and may be an error (we know of no suitable habitat for this species). It is apparently repeated in the Namibia Bird Atlas. Reported north-east in **Botswana** only to the Makarikari (Smithers 1964), and Penry (1994) mapped it north of 19°S only in the north-west; recent reports are from the Gumare area (1921B) southwards. Has not been recorded in **Zimbabwe**.

Black-lored Babbler *Turdoides melanops*
Mapped as occurring in the Caprivi Strip, **Namibia** (1724C), adjacent to south-west Zambia (R. Simmons & M. Herremans *in* Harrison *et al.* 1997). Recorded from the eastern Caprivi according to Brown (1990), but no records are given by Koen (1988) or Branfield (1990). Brown's records require confirmation. Regularly recorded in Mahango Game Reserve (1821B) and the adjacent woodlands east of the Okavango River (CH). In **Botswana** confined to the western Okavango, north to Sepopa (1822C: Smithers 1964) and Shakawe (1821B: Penry 1994, Brewster & Tyler 1998). Unrecorded from **Zimbabwe**.

Southern Pied Babbler *Turdoides bicolor*
Recorded from the eastern Caprivi, **Namibia** (Brown 1990), but not plotted in that area north of 18°S by M. Herremans (*in* Harrison *et al.* 1997), and mapped in **Botswana** only to 1821A by Penry (1994). In **Zimbabwe** it ranges north to Hwange National Park in the Kennedy area (1827C: Irwin 1981).

Ashy Tit *Parus cinerascens*
A single plot in Harrison *et al.* (1997), repeated in the **Namibia** Bird Atlas, is in the Katima Mulilo area (1724A), which holds little suitable habitat for this species. It does occur in Mahango Game Reserve on the Okavango River (1821B: CH) but is apparently very rare. Penry (1994) shows it to be practically absent from north-east **Botswana**, north of 19°S, and it is unknown at Kasane. However, the species does occur along the Namibian border, east from Mohembo (SJT). In north-west **Zimbabwe** it has been collected on Nampini Ranch (Irwin 1981), and its possible occurrence north of the Zambezi cannot be ruled out.

Cape Penduline Tit *Anthoscopus minutus*
Mapped by K. Barnes & M. Herremans *in* Harrison *et al.* (1997) and repeated in the Namibia Bird Atlas, in **Botswana/Namibia** squares 1724D and 1725C, records which had been questioned by Aspinwall (1988), who suggested that Grey Penduline Tit *A. caroli* is more likely (being fairly common in the Kalahari woodlands of northern Botswana: Penry 1994). Smithers (1964) reported Cape Penduline Tit north to Sepopa (1822C) in the west, and to Sibanini (1926D) in the east, and Penry (1994) presented a similar picture. The northernmost record in recent years is from the Mababe Depression (1824C: Brewster & Tyler 2000); it remains unknown from the Kasane area. In **Zimbabwe** it is confined to the south-west, north only to Nkai, at 19°S (Irwin 1981).

Southern White-crowned Shrike *Eurocephalus anguitimens*
Occurs in **Botswana** at Kasane, within sight of Zambia (RJD), but unrecorded north of the river. In **Namibia** not uncommon along roads through *Baikiaea* forests west of Katima Mulilo and is seasonally common in mopane woodlands

throughout the eastern Caprivi. In north-west **Zimbabwe** to as far north as Kazuma Pan (Irwin 1981).

Great Sparrow *Passer motitensis*
Mapped as occurring in **Namibia** in the Caprivi Strip (1822A), adjacent to south-west Zambia (M. Herremans *in* Harrison *et al.* 1997), but this may be a misidentification, and the species is unlikely to occur so far north or to reach Zambia. Smithers (1964) had no Caprivi record, and there is no record anywhere nearby in **Botswana** (Penry 1994). However, as Penry (1994) indicates, Great Sparrow does occur as far north as the Namibian border, west of the Okavango.

Chestnut Weaver *Ploceus rubiginosus*
Has in recent years been found to range as far east as north-west **Botswana**, north to 1821B (Brewster 1989, Penry 1994), and the species may be in the process of expanding north.

Red-headed Finch *Amadina erythrocephala*
Koen (1988) reported it as numerous in the eastern Caprivi (**Namibia**) and there are several records shown by M. Herremans *in* Harrison *et al.* 1997 (two plots in particular are far removed from the species' main range). These probably represent misidentifications of either Cut-throat Finch *A. fasciata* or Red-headed Quelea *Quelea erythrops*, which are quite common in the eastern Caprivi (CH & SB). In **Botswana** recorded north only to Tsau and Mumpswe by Smithers (1964), but Penry (1994) maps it in the western half of the country to 19°S, with even one plot in 1725C. In north-west **Zimbabwe** a pair was present at Little Toms, Hwange National Park, on 27 August and 1 September (C. Baker *in* Tree 1996)—although this is well outside the bird's normal range, it may be that some do wander north in drought years.

Yellow Canary *Serinus flaviventris*
No more than a vagrant to western **Zambia** (two records in Dowsett *et al.* 2008). A plot mapped in square 1724A (W. R. J. Dean *in* Harrison *et al.* 1997), apparently in the Caprivi Strip (**Namibia**), lacks details and requires confirmation; so too does a **Zimbabwe** record mapped in the Kazungula square (1725C), as already pointed out by Hustler (1998).

Some miscellaneous cases

Gorgeous Bushshrike *Malaconotus viridis*
In **Zambia** nominate *viridis* barely occurs south of 14°S, and it is unknown from **Botswana** and **Namibia**. Mentioned here because there are plots for this species (V. Parker *in* Harrison *et al.* 1997) from the **Zimbabwe** side of the Middle Zambezi Valley (squares 1529C,D, 1628D), but only one of these records has been published, that accepted by the Zimbabwe Rarities Committee from the Chewore Safari Area (Hustler 1989). There is no record on the Zambian bank, but if it is resident in the Middle Zambezi this could be indication of a 'stepping stone' between populations in the lower Zambezi / Shire Valleys and those in western Zambia (sometimes treated as separate species, *M. viridis* and Four-coloured Bushshrike *M. quadricolor*).

Streaky-headed Seedeater *Serinus gularis*
Occurs in south-west **Zambia** in an extension from northern **Botswana** (Penry 1994) and **Namibia**. A map of the species' range in **Zimbabwe** gives the impression that it occurs throughout much of the Middle Zambezi Valley (R. Nuttall *in* Harrison *et al.* 1997), but this is presumably based on its inclusion in the list of birds of the Kariba basin (Donnelly & Donnelly 1983). In fact it does not occur below the Zambezi escarpment (Irwin 1977, 1981, Riddell 2004). One was reportedly seen in Hwange National Park (between Little Somavundhla and Ngweshla Pans: I. C. Riddell *in* Irwin 1998), but there is no indication that it occurs in north-west Zimbabwe or adjacent Zambia.

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Appendix: Gazetteer

There is a gazetteer of localities in Zambia and neighbouring countries in Dowsett *et al.* (2008: 533–555), and we give below only places not listed in that work (to 30-minute square only when we have not traced exact coordinates).

Andara, *Namibia*	1821A	18°03'S	21°28'E
Bejane Pan, Hwange National Park, *Zimbabwe*	1826C		
Boteti River, *Botswana*	2023B	c.20°12'S	23°43'E
Caprivi Corner, *Namibia*	1820B	18°20'S	21°00'E
Chamabonda Vlei, near Victoria Falls, *Zimbabwe*	1725D	17°58'S	25°41'E
Chirisa Game Reserve, *Zimbabwe*	1728A	18°00'S	28°12'E
Dautsa, *Botswana*	2022C	20°40'S	22°25'E
Deka, *Zimbabwe*	1825D	18°35'S	25°50'E
Eenhana, *Namibia*	1716A	17°28'S	16°20'E
Etosha National Park, *Namibia*	1816C	c.18°50'S	16°20'E
Francistown, *Botswana*	2127A	21°10'S	27°30'E
Gaborone, *Botswana*	2425D	24°39'S	25°54'E
Gache Gache near Kariba, *Zimbabwe*	1628D	16°43'S	28°57'E
Gumare, *Botswana*	1922A	19°20'S	22°10'E
Harare, *Zimbabwe*	1731C	17°50'S	31°04'E
Ikoga, Okavango, *Botswana*	1822C	18°51'S	22°18'E
Impalila Island, *Botswana*	1725C	17°47'S	25°15'E
Kabulabula, *Botswana*	1724D	17°48'S	24°57'E
Kalizo Lodge, near Kalembeza, *Botswana*	1724A	c.17°30'S	24°30'E
Kasane, *Botswana*	1725C	17°48'S	25°09'E
Katima Mulilo, *Namibia*	1724A	17°30'S	24°16'E
Kavango region, *Namibia*	1819A	18°30'S	19°30'E
Kennedy area, Hwange National Park, *Zimbabwe*	1827C	18°52'S	27°09'E
Kongola, *Namibia*	1723C	17°48'S	23°23'E
Kwando River, *Namibia*	1723C	17°42'S	23°23'E
Kwikamba pans, Chobe, *Botswana*	1824A	18°15'S	24°15'E
Ngami, Lake *Botswana*	2022B	20°25'S	22°50'E
Lake Dow, *Botswana*	2124B	21°16'S	24°45'E
Latala Pan, Caprivi Strip, *Namibia*	Not traced		
Liambezi Lake, *Namibia*	1724C	17°54'S	24°20'E
Lianshulu, Mashi River, *Namibia*	1823A	18°10'S	23°25'E
Linyanti swamp, *Namibia/Botswana*	1823B	18°22'S	23°40'E
Little Somavundhla Pan, Hwange National Park, *Zimbabwe*	1927A	19°02'S	27°12'E
Little Toms, Hwange National Park, *Zimbabwe*	1825D	18°37'S	26°00'E
Mababe Depression, *Botswana*	1824C	19°00'S	24°10'E
Mahango Game Park, *Namibia*	1821B	18°09'S	21°42'E
Makarikari, *Botswana*	2024B	20°30'S	25°00'E
Mamili National Park, *Namibia*	1824A	18°02'S	24°01'E
Maun, *Botswana*	1923C	19°58'S	23°26'E
Mohembo, *Botswana*	1821B	18°18'S	21°48'E
Moremi Game Reserve, *Botswana*	1923A	19°18'S	23°15'E
Mowana Lodge, Kasane, *Botswana*	1725C	c.17°49'S	25°09'E
M'Pacha, *Namibia*	1724C	17°38'S	24°11'E
Mudumu National Park, *Namibia*	1823A	18°05'S	23°29'E
Mumpswe, *Botswana*	2025B	20°10'S	25°50'E
Mwaku Pan, *Botswana*	2022D	20°38'S	22°46'E
Nakatwa Lodge, Mashi River, *Namibia*	1823A	18°10'S	23°25'E
Namushasha, Kwando River, *Namibia*	1723C	17°46'S	23°22'E
Nata, *Botswana*	2026A	20°09'S	26°07'E
Ngweshla Pan, Hwange National Park, *Zimbabwe*	1927A	19°02'S	27°05'E
Ngami Lake, *Botswana*	2022B	20°25'S	22°50'E
Ngoma bridge, *Botswana*	1724D	17°55'S	24°43'E
Ndhovu Lodge, Okavango River, *Namibia*	1821B	c.18°08'S	21°40'E
Nhoma omuramba, Kaudom Game Reserve, *Namibia*	1820D	c.18°55'S	20°45'E
Nkai, *Zimbabwe*	1828D	18°59'S	28°52'E
Nkunguyembe hill, Chipata, *Zambia*	1332D	13°35'S	32°41'E
Nogaatsa, Chobe National Park, *Botswana*	1824B	18°17'S	24°57'E
Nukwa, Caprivi Strip, *Namibia*	1723C		
Nyakasanga / Zambezi confluence, *Zimbabwe*	1529C	15°50'S	29°10'E
Oshikango, *Namibia*	1715B	17°24'S	15°53'E
Phokoje Pan, *Botswana*	2123C	21°45'S	23°15'E
Qaaxhwa, *Botswana*	1922A	19°03'S	22°23'E
Ruacana, *Namibia/Angola*	1714A	17°23'S	14°13'E
Rundu, *Namibia*	1719D	17°54'S	19°44'E
Savuti, Chobe National Park, *Botswana*	1824C	18°42'S	24°08'E
Sepopa, *Botswana*	1822C	18°47'S	22°10'E
Shakawe, *Botswana*	1821B	18°22'S	21°50'E
Shindi area, Okavango, *Botswana*	1923A	19°08'S	23°09'E
Shorobe, *Botswana*	1923D	19°43'S	23°44'E
Sibanini Pan, *Botswana*	1926D	19°47'S	26°34'E
Sua Pan, *Botswana*	2026C	20°35'S	26°09'E
Tale Pan, *Botswana*	2022D	20°34'S	22°50'E
Tobera, *Botswana*	1822A	18°15'S	22°10'E
Tsau, *Botswana*	2022A	20°10'S	22°27'E
Tsodilo Hills, *Botswana*	1821D	18°45'S	21°45'E
Tsumkwe in former Bushmanland			
Westwood, *Zimbabwe*	1725C	17°54'S	25°27'E
Xugana, *Botswana*	1923A	19°04'S	23°06'E

Recent observations of Abyssinian endemic bird species in Eritrea

Jason Anderson[a] *and Dawit Berhane*[b]

Observations récentes d'oiseaux endémiques aux hautes terres d'Abyssinie en Érythrée. Les longues périodes d'instabilité dans la région et la difficulté d'accès ont fait que peu de recherches ont été effectuées sur le statut actuel des oiseaux endémiques aux hautes terres d'Abyssinie en Érythrée. Nous rapportons des observations de ces espèces menées depuis 2002, et fournissons des détails sur leur statut, distribution, comportement alimentaire et nidification. Nous présentons les premières données confirmées de nidification en Érythrée pour l'Inséparable d'Abyssinie *Agapornis taranta*, le Barbican barré *Lybius undatus*, le Gobemouche chocolat *Melaenornis chocolatinus* et la Mésange à dos blanc *Parus leuconotus*, ainsi qu'une donnée probable concernant la nidification du Pic d'Abyssinie *Dendropicos abyssinicus*. Nous décrivons également trois sites clés, dont la protection est importante pour assurer la survie de ces espèces en Érythrée.

Summary. Due to long periods of instability in the region and difficulty of access, little research has been performed into the current status of bird species endemic to the Abyssinian highlands found in Eritrea. We report observations of these species made since 2002 and provide details on their status and distribution, feeding behaviour and nesting records, including the first confirmed breeding records of Black-winged Lovebird *Agapornis taranta*, Banded Barbet *Lybius undatus*, Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher *Melaenornis chocolatinus* and White-backed Black Tit *Parus leuconotus*, as well as a probable breeding record for Abyssinian Woodpecker *Dendropicos abyssinicus*. We also describe three key sites, whose conservation is important to the continued presence of these species in Eritrea.

Of approximately 32 species endemic to the Abyssinian highlands of Ethiopia and Eritrea, 15 have been recorded in Eritrea (Ash & Atkins 2009, Redman *et al.* 2009). Whilst most of these species are well documented in Ethiopia, little research has been undertaken on their status and distribution in Eritrea since its independence from Ethiopia in 1991. Ash & Atkins (2009) and Redman *et al.* (2009) draw both on older records from Eritrea, pre-1991, as well as a smaller number of recent records, many of them from JA. Due to the long period of conflict before 1991, and more recent changes in land use, including reforestation programmes, dam-building and irrigation projects, changes in population and distribution are likely to have occurred for all the endemics.

Here we provide information on all 15 species concerning their status and distribution in Eritrea, as well as remarks on breeding, juvenile plumage, behaviour and food plants that augment our knowledge based on the available literature.

The accounts are based on our own observations in 2002–09 (DB) and 2007–09 (JA) in the country. There is a significant bias towards the Adi Keih sub-zone, mainly because JA was based there, but also because this area provides the best-available habitat for many of these species in the highlands.

Notes on key sites where one or several of these species are present are also provided. Given that there are very few such sites in the highlands, we feel that these are in considerable need of conservation to ensure that Eritrea protects its Abyssinian endemics.

Wattled Ibis *Bostrychia carunculata*

Status and distribution Resident. No seasonal movements recorded. Whilst we found it fairly easy to locate feeding parties, due to the scarcity of suitable sites, the total population in Eritrea is probably small. We estimate <100 birds in the Adi Keih sub-zone, one of *c.*10–15 sub-zones where the species probably occurs. We recorded the species at 2,100–2,600 m (well within the known altitudinal range given in Brown *et al.* 1982), from Serajeka, 15 km north of Asmara where it is scarce, to Senafe sub-zone in the south, where it is commoner. Due to the increase in reservoir construction since independence, which has provided suitable feeding areas such as livestock pastures, and the increase in *Eucalyptus* (Myrtaceae) trees, which are used for roosting, it

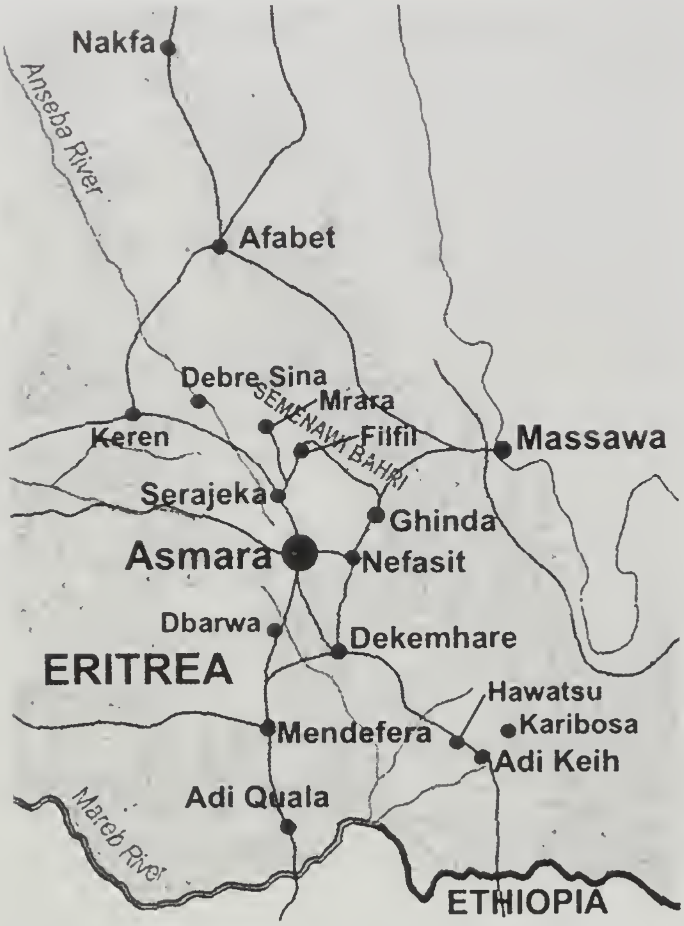

Figure 1. Map of the Eritrean Highlands showing locations mentioned in the text (adapted from Ash & Atkins 2009 with permission)

Carte des hautes terres de Erythrée indiquant les localites mentionnées dans le texte (d'après Ash & Atkins 2009, avec leur autorisation)

is probable that Wattled Ibis has recently extended its range further north.

Other observations A roost site in an inaccessible cave (40 m up a 50-m cliff) was found near Adi Keih where 4–8 birds often arrived *c.*30 minutes before dusk. Most frequently noted feeding on grazing pastures (where they sometimes associate with cattle) in valleys, especially near reservoirs, although groups disperse during the wet season (July–October), and can then be found on agricultural land.

Rouget's Rail *Rougetius rougetii*
Status and distribution Resident. Due to the lack of suitable habitat, Rouget's Rail is never numerous in Eritrea, and is probably declining. However, in suitable habitat it can be common and easily located due to its far-reaching and often-heard call. Small territories recorded are consistent with the literature (Dorst & Roux 1973 *in* Urban *et al.* 1986). Commonest in Senafe and Adi Keih sub-zones, but extends north to Asmara, where there are several known populations, for example at Mai Hutsa, and further north at Serejeka. Recorded by us at 2,200–2,600 m, i.e. within the known altitudinal range of 2,000–4,100 m (Urban *et al.* 1986).

Other observations Often in irrigated agriculture and even intensively farmed areas. Forages in fields as well as on grassy banks and under low vegetation or reeds. In some parts of Eritrea, Rouget's Rail appears to have adapted fairly well to the increase in human population and intensive agriculture around suitable habitat, where birds can become habituated to the presence of humans, foraging in the open in the vicinity of farmers, cowherds and livestock.

White-collared Pigeon *Columba albitorques*
Status and distribution All observations are from the Senafe sub-zone, where it is common, and the Adi Keih sub-zone, where scarcer, but common around Safira, where the species may breed. Rare further north. Seasonal movement possible, as the species tends to become scarcer in the north at the end of the dry season (February–April). All records by us are from above 2,300 m, i.e. within the known altitudinal range of 1,800–4,000 m (Urban *et al.* 1986).

Other observations Flocks regularly visit water to drink, and are most easily observed at reservoirs near Senafe. One suspected communal breeding record from a disused building near Tekwonda, Adi Keih sub-zone. Not persecuted by the local population.

Black-winged Lovebird *Agapornis taranta*
Status and distribution Resident. No seasonal movements noted. Widespread across the Eritrean highlands. Given suitable habitat, pairs and small flocks are fairly common. Recorded from Senafe sub-zone north to Debre Sina in Elabered sub-zone and west to Milezanay on the border of Gash Barka. Also fairly common around Adi Quala, indicating that it ranges across the western branch of the highlands. Recorded by us at 1,500–2,900 m, within the altitudinal range of 1,400–3,800 m given by Fry *et al.* 1988 (erroneously, Redman *et al.* 2009 mark the upper limit at 2,750 m, and Collar 1997 marks the lower limit at 1,800 m). Previously confirmed at sites significantly further north in the Nakfa area (Ash & Atkins 2009), thus

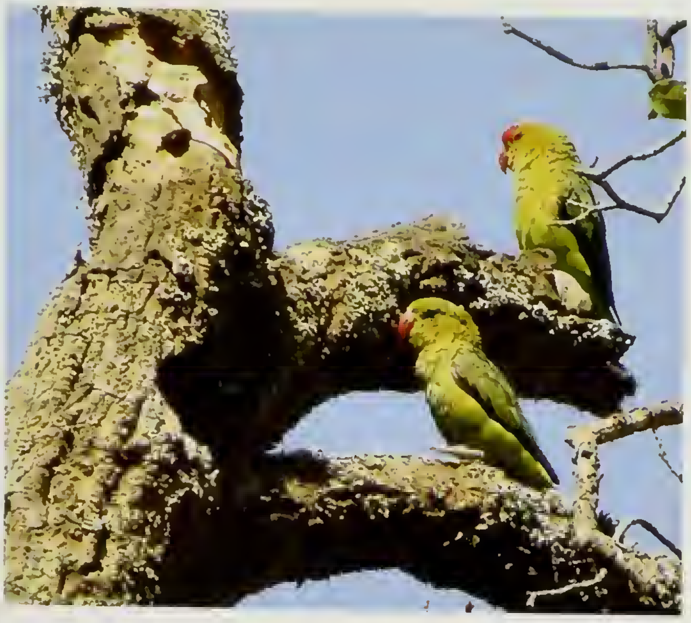

Figure 2. Pair of Black-winged Lovebirds *Agapornis taranta* at nest, Karibosa, April 2009 (Jason Anderson)

Couple d'Inséparables d'Abyssinie *Agapornis taranta* au nid, Karibosa, avril 2009 (Jason Anderson)

this species is widespread throughout the Eritrean Abyssinian Highlands.

Other observations We have several breeding records, the first for Eritrea, all in cavities in *Euphorbia abyssinica* (Euphorbiaceae; old, dry trees), *Olea europaea* (Oleaceae) and *Rhus glutinosa abyssinica* (Anacardiaceae). Nest holes were *c.*4 cm in diameter, 4–6 m above ground. Birds were courting and preparing the nest site in April 2009 (at Karibosa, *c.*2,500 m, Fig. 2) and incubating eggs in March 2006 (in Mrara, *c.*1,500 m), with three breeding records in 2003, one in October (the other two month unknown), all at Debre Sina, *c.*2,400 m. A presumed juvenile photographed in December in Adi Keih sub-zone had faint brown markings on the throat and upper breast, and a paler lower mandible. Observed feeding on *Juniperus procera* (Cupressaceae), *Acokanthera schimperi* (Apocynaceae), *Ficus sycomorus* (Moraceae) and *Euphorbia abyssinica*.

Banded Barbet *Lybius undatus*
Status and distribution Resident. No seasonal movements noted. *L. u. thiogaster* is frequent to common in almost any area of native trees in range, sometimes in towns and villages. In contrast, Short & Horne (2001: 190) described the species as 'local and usually uncommon'. Recorded from Senafe sub-zone north to Adi Teklezan sub-zone, although Ash & Atkins (2009) mention records slightly further north-west near Keren and further north near Afabet. Recorded by us at 1,650–2,900 m, within the altitudinal range of 300–3,040 m given in Fry *et al.* (1988). Ash & Atkins (2009) and Redman *et al.* (2009) give slightly narrower altitudinal ranges of 450–2,280 m and 450–2,750 m, respectively.

Other observations One confirmed breeding record in Senafe sub-zone, the first for Eritrea, and possibly the only description of a nest for the species to date (Fry *et al.* 1988, Short & Horne 2001). A pair was observed feeding at least one chick in a nest within a *Ficus vastus* (Moraceae) in May 2004. The nest hole was 3 m above ground, and 4–5 cm in diameter. In March 2009, a bird was seen inspecting a possible nest site *c.*4 m above ground, also 4–5 cm in diameter, in Karibosa, Adi Keih sub-zone (photographed). The species was observed feeding on fruit of *Ficus thonningii*, *F. vastus* (Moraceae), *Bersama abyssinica* (Melianthaceae) and *Gymnosporia senegalensis* (Celastraceae).

Abyssinian Woodpecker *Dendropicos abyssinicus*
Status and distribution Uncommon. Presumed resident. Recorded only six times by us, at

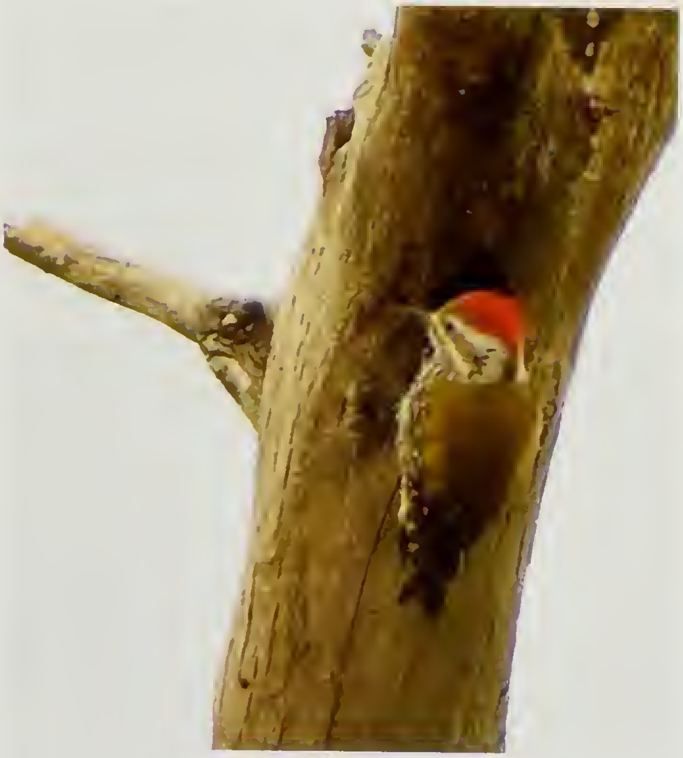

Figure 3. Male Abyssinian Woodpecker *Dendropicos abyssinicus* prospecting nest hole, Filfil Sabur, January 2009 (Jason Anderson)

Pic d'Abyssinie *Dendropicos abyssinicus* mâle inspectant une cavité, Filfil Sabur, janvier 2009 (Jason Anderson) widespread locations across the highlands; Filfil Sabur, at 1,300 m (twice), lower than previously recorded (Fry *et al.* 1988; Redman *et al.* 2009 cite 1,300 m, based on our records), Milezanay at 1,900 m, near Elabered at 1,600 m, near Gheleb at 1,800 m, and near Adi Keih at 2,300 m. The records at Elabered and Gheleb confirm the species' presence further north than previously recorded (Ash & Atkins 2009).

Other observations A pair observed at Filfil Sabur in January 2009 at a presumed breeding site, where the male was photographed inspecting a *c.*3-cm diameter hole *c.*5 m above ground in a dead *Juniperus procera* (Fig. 3). The female was nearby. As well as its known preference for *Euphorbia* (Euphorbiaceae) and *Juniperus* (Cupressaceae) (Fry *et al.* 1988), we also recorded the species in *Acacia* and in mixed broadleaf woodland.

Rüppell's Black Chat *Myrmecocichla melaena*
Status and distribution Resident. No seasonal movements noted. Common in suitable habitat in Senafe and Adi Keih sub-zones, but not recorded further north. All records at 2,300–3,000 m (slightly higher than the 2,830 m given in Ash & Atkins 2009), with one notable exception, at *c.*1,700 m, where a pair was recorded in a steep rocky valley with a permanent freshwater spring on Mereb escarpment, 10 km west of Adi Keih. Ash & Atkins (2009) report the species occasionally descending to 1,060 m in Ethiopia.

Other observations One presumed juvenile, photographed near Adi Keih in January 2009, had a pale yellow gape, but was otherwise similar to adults (Fig. 4). Preference for rocky areas often in gorges and near water is consistent with the literature (Keith *et al.* 1992). Tolerant of introduced *Opuntia ficus-indica* (Cactaceae) prickly pear cactus.

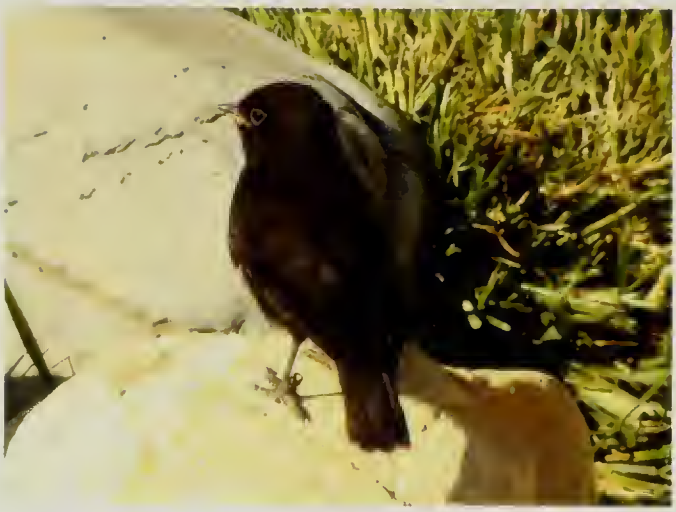

Figure 4. Juvenile Rüppell's Black Chat / Traquet de Rüppell *Myrmecocichla melaena*, Adi Keih, January 2009 (Jason Anderson)

White-winged Cliff Chat *Thamnolaea semirufa*
Status and distribution Uncommon to rare. Only four records, all by DB: at Debra Sina, Elabered sub-zone (in 2003 and 2004; months unknown), in Gheleb sub-zone at 1,800 m (in 2003; month unknown), and at Mai Seraw, Segeneiti sub-zone at 1,850 m in May 2006 (where also observed by K. Harte). These altitudes are typical for the species (Ash & Atkins 2009). The Debra Sina and Gheleb sightings confirm the species *c.*100 km further north than previously recorded in Eritrea (Ash & Atkins 2009).

Other observations Observed in a steep, rocky valley, at an opening in olive-dominated broadleaf woodland in Gheleb, in open riparian woodland dominated by *Acacia* (Fabaceae) at Mai Seraw, Segeneiti sub-zone, and in a steep, rocky valley with *Ficus* (Moraceae) and *Euphorbia* spp. at Debra Sina, Elabered sub-zone.

Ethiopian Cisticola *Cisticola (galactotes) lugubris*
Status and distribution Resident. No seasonal movements noted. Common in suitable habitat in the southern highlands, especially in Senafe and Adi Keih sub-zones, at 2,100–2,900 m. Altitudinal ranges in the literature vary widely for this species. Ryan (2006) gives 1,500–2,600 m, whereas Redman *et al.* (2009) state 700–4,000 m. Also fairly common in suitable habitat further north in Filfil Sabur, where recorded at 1,500 m, and further west at Menguda, in Dbarwa sub-zone, extending its range into the western branch of the highlands. Ash & Atkins cite a record of *C. galactotes* much further west, near the Sudanese border, based on a specimen collected in 1953 held at the Natural History Museum (BMNH), Tring, labelled as *C. g. lugubris* (BMNH 1953.35.14). JA examined this specimen in August 2009 and compared it to two specimens of *C. (g.) lugubris* from highland Eritrea, finding its general appearance closer to specimens of *C. (g.) marginatus* from Sudan, although subspecies identification could not be confirmed. O. Davies (pers. comm.), having examined the same specimen in November 2010, also believed that it represented *C. (g.)*

marginatus, based on the collection locality, size and the absence of dark feather centres to the uppertail-coverts. The latter observer took the following measurements of BMNH 1953.35.14: wing 56.51 mm, tail 47.88 mm, bill 14.71 mm and tarsus 19.82 mm. For adult male summer specimens of relevant taxa, OD has the following measurements (mean with standard deviation in parentheses). *C.* (*g.*) *lugubris*: wing (n=6) 62.06 (2.05) mm, tail (n=6) 51.57 (3.97) mm, bill (n=5) 15.46 (0.24) mm and tarsus (n=6) 21.93 (0.65) mm; and *C.* (*g.*) *marginatus*: wing (n=5) 56.41 (1.08) mm, tail (n=5) 50.9 (1.55) mm, bill (n=5) 14.84 (0.62) mm and tarsus (n=5) 20.05 (0.13) mm.

Other observations One observed collecting nesting material (dried grass) on 31 May 2009, building a nest in vegetation on a steep bank overhanging a small pool of water, 2 m above the water level. Due to the inaccessibility of the site, the nest itself was not found.

Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher *Melaenornis chocolatinus*

Status and distribution Resident. No seasonal movements noted. Although habitat specific, it is usually fairly common, with five individuals observed within 1 km^2 at Hawatsu. Only recorded in Adi Keih sub-zone, although probably also occurs in Senafe sub-zone. Reliable locations include Hawatsu and Karibosa. Recorded at 2,300–2,600 m, i.e. within the altitudinal range of 1,820–3,200 m given by Ash & Atkins (2009).

Other observations Confirmed breeding, the first record for Eritrea, when a juvenile was observed and photographed, begging food from adults at Hawatsu in Adi Keih sub-zone in late September 2008. The juvenile had black irides, and was strongly streaked white over the dark brown crown and nape, with dark brown streaks on the pale grey breast, and pale streaks across the median coverts and along the tips of the primary-coverts (Fig. 5). Urban *et al.* (1997: 442, citing Desfayes 1975) state that it 'hunts in typical fly-catcher manner' 'usually >3 m above ground, and sometimes darts to ground for an insect'. In contrast, JA observed birds feeding near Adi Keih, in riparian woodland where native trees such as *Acacia* and *Ficus* spp. are found around well-grazed grassy areas. Individuals were often seen scanning the ground from perches of <3 m, frequently dropping to the ground to forage for insect and invertebrate prey, more frequently than taking airborne prey.

White-backed Black Tit *Parus leuconotus*

Status and distribution Rare. Only four records by us, all in 2008–09 on the eastern escarpment

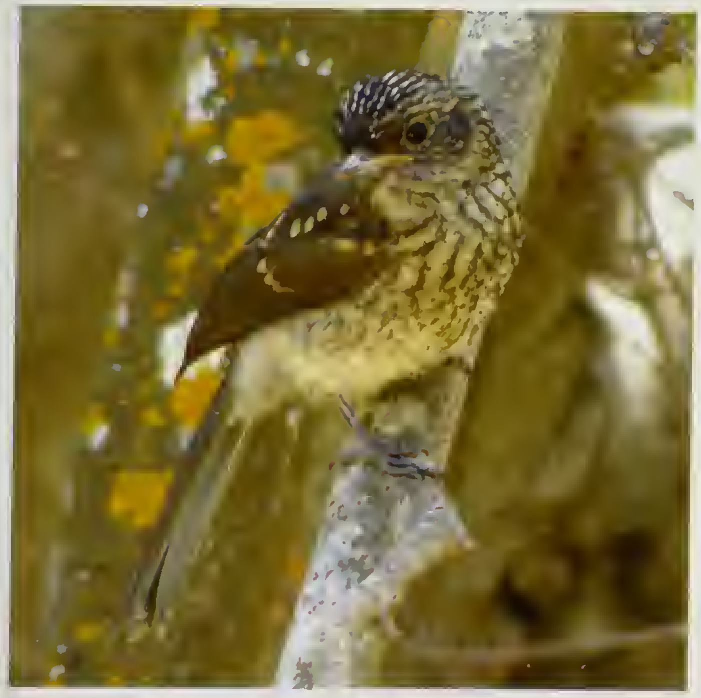

Figure 5. Juvenile Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher / Gobemouche chocolat *Melaenornis chocolatinus*, Hawatsu, September 2008 (Jason Anderson)

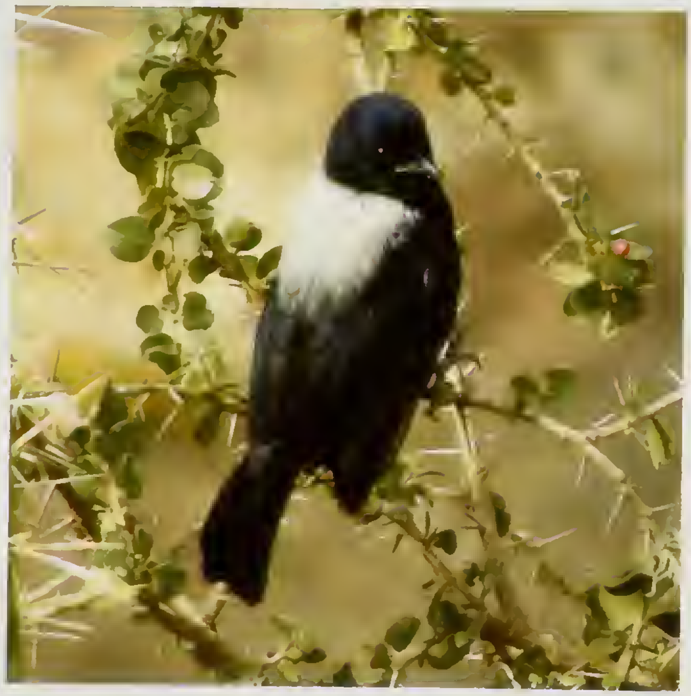

Figure 6. Juvenile White-backed Black Tit / Mésange à dos blanc *Parus leuconotus*, Safira, October 2008 (Jason Anderson)

in Adi Keih sub-zone, at Safira (two records near Qohaito archaeological site in October 2008 and January 2009), Karibosa in April 2009 and Demhina in February 2008. All sites were within 15 km and at 2,000–2,600 m. These are the first confirmed records since 1957 (Gosler & Clement 2007). Previous records exist from further north, between Keren and Afabet (Ash & Atkins 2009), although we were unable to confirm the species in this area.

Other observations Confirmed breeding, the first record for Eritrea, when a juvenile was observed with a party of five other birds begging food from adults at Safira in October 2008. The juvenile appeared identical to the adults, except for its pale brown inner gape (Fig. 6). It was emitting frequent high-pitched calls. A party of six was observed feeding on shrubs mixed with the introduced *Opuntia ficus-indica*). Birds were observed gleaning for insects on *Juniperus procera* and *Ficus sycomorus*.

Abyssinian Oriole *Oriolus monacha*
Status and distribution Resident. No seasonal movements noted. All our records are from the narrow band of broadleaf woodland that extends across the steep eastern escarpment of the highlands, from Ghinda north to Mrara in Leminat sub-zone. Fairly common at Filfil Solomuna, in the centre of this area, but otherwise uncommon. Recorded by us at 1,000–2,000 m (Ash & Atkins 2009 give an elevational range of 900–2,420 m). Previously recorded in the Adi Keih/Senafe area (Ash & Atkins 2009), although, despite extensive searches, we did not find it there and it has probably become extinct in this area due to severe deforestation during recent conflicts.

Thick-billed Raven *Corvus crassirostris*
Status and distribution Rare, probably a vagrant to Eritrea. Only one record, by DB, from Debre Sina, Elabered sub-zone, in 2004 (month unknown) at *c.*2,400 m. Only four previous confirmed records in Eritrea (Ash & Atkins 2009). Fry *et al.* (2000: 552) note it to be 'uncommon to frequent' in Eritrea, possibly based on records by Smith (1957). If so, the species may have declined significantly in recent years.

White-billed Starling *Onychognathus albirostris*
Status and distribution: Resident. No seasonal movements noted. Given suitable habitat, the species is fairly common in Senafe and Adi Keih sub-zones, with significant numbers (80 in February 2009) roosting and possibly breeding on the Metera monolith very near Senafe town. Interestingly, a small population was also observed in Adi Quala sub-zone, in the western branch of the highlands, at 1,700 m, where there are suitable roosting cliffs. This is probably an isolated population, and has not been reported previously (Fry *et al.* 2000, Ash & Atkins 2009). Recorded at 1,700–2,800 m, confirming the species at altitudes much lower than previously recorded in Eritrea (2,460 m; Fry *et al.* 2000, repeated in Ash & Atkins 2009). Feare & Craig (1998) give a minimum of 2,000 m in Ethiopia, but do not mention that the species occurs in Eritrea. Vivero Pol (2006: 58) states 'rarely below 1,800 m'.

Other observations One confirmed breeding record from Adi Keih sub-zone. A nest lined with grass and sticks was found in a crevice 5 m up on cliffs near Safira, where one bird was seen incubating in mid-September 2008.

White-throated Seedeater *Serinus xanthopygius*
Status and distribution Resident. No seasonal movements noted. Rarely common; usually seen in feeding parties of 2–6 birds. The species avoids the highest parts of the highlands, but does occur on both the eastern and western escarpments, and was recorded from Senafe sub-zone north to Filfil Solomuna along the eastern escarpment, and from Adi Quala sub-zone north to Adi Neami sub-zone on the western escarpment. Usually found at 1,000–2,000 m, occasionally to 2,200 m, consistent with its published elevation range (Fry *et al.* 2000, Ash & Atkins 2009). Previously recorded as far north as Nakfa with one record much further west, near Tesseney (Ash & Atkins 2009).

Other observations Extensively observed by DB at Menguda in Dbarwa sub-zone, where it is associated very closely with Brown-rumped Seedeaters *S. tristriatus*. A juvenile was also observed at Menguda, in August 2007, begging food from adults. Found in a fairly wide variety of habitats in open country, including cultivated farmland, scrubland, open broadleaf and *Acacia* woodland, but nearly always near watercourses. Observed feeding on the introduced *Optunia ficus-indica* and more commonly on the introduced *Nicotiana glauca* (Solanaceae), for which the species has a strong preference.

Key sites for the Abyssinian endemics in Eritrea

Eastern Escarpment rain forest from Gheleb through Filfil to Ghinda (15°46'33"N 38°47'58"E to 15°22'57"N 39°05'55"E; 800–1,800 m)

BirdLife International designated Important Bird Areas ER003 (15°40'N 38°53'E; *c*.20,000 ha) and ER006 (15°27'N 39°05'E; *c*.78,000 ha) both lie within this area (Fishpool & Evans 2001). The area known as 'Filfil', or 'Semenawi Keyih Bahri' (northern Red Sea) lies at the heart of Eritrea's only substantial remaining tract of native forest (Fig. 7). The forest stretches in a narrow band across the eastern escarpment, from Gheleb south to Ghinda, *c*.60 km further south-east. Altitude ranges from 1,800 m to below 800 m, and several forest types occur, from *Olea europaea* and *Juniperus procera* dominated forest at higher altitudes, to *Combretum* (Combretaceae) dominated broadleaf forest below 1,300 m. In some areas, cultivation, heavy livestock grazing and the introduction of alien species have reduced or degraded the native forest, and elsewhere, presumed second-growth woodland with small stands of primary growth remain intact. The areas around Gheleb, Mrara, Filfil Medhanit and Agomeda are some of the best-preserved tracts and are in need of permanent protection to prevent their degradation. Officially, the area around Filfil, where the main road descends the escarpment is accorded protected status and monitored for illegal activity, and there is evidence of natural reforestation at some locations near Sabur, Medhanit and Filfil Solomuna. However, the presence of several invasive species, including one presumed invasive bindweed may be a greater danger to the health of the forest. Other areas are

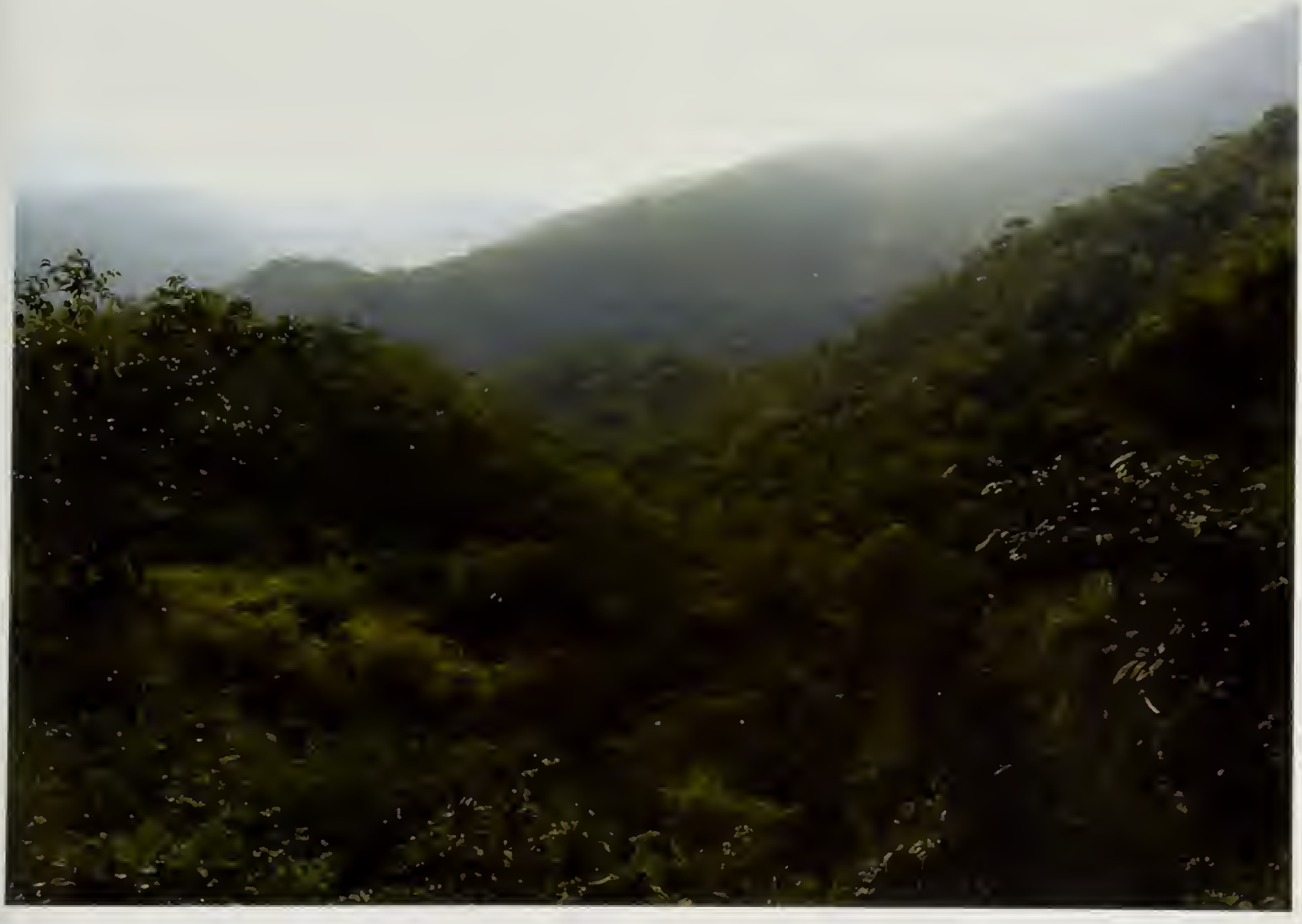

Figure 7. Cloud rain forest at 1,000 m, Filfil Medhanit, Eritrea (Jason Anderson)

Forêt ombrophile à 1.000 m, Filfil Medhanit, Érythrée (Jason Anderson)

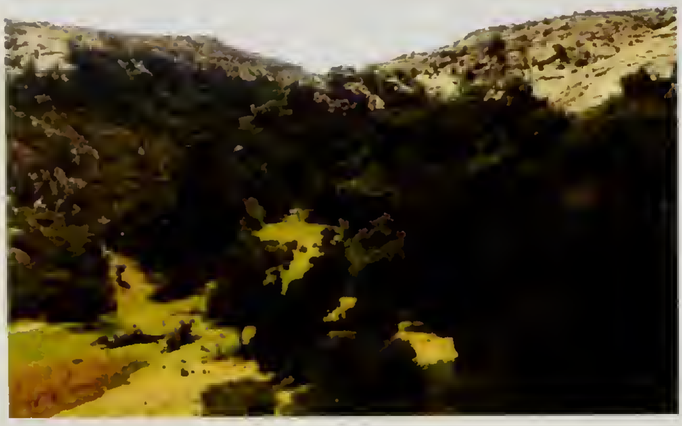

Figure 8. Hawatsu Copse, Eritrea, 2,300 m (Jason Anderson)

Les bosquets de Hawatsu, Érythrée, 2.300 m (Jason Anderson)

vulnerable to deforestation. Abyssinian endemics found here include: Black-winged Lovebird, Banded Barbet, Abyssinian Woodpecker (suspected breeding here), Abyssinian Oriole, Ethiopian Cisticola, White-throated Seedeater, and possibly White-winged Cliff Chat. Several near-endemics (either endemic to the Horn of Africa or the Abyssinian highland massif) also occur, namely Erckel's Francolin *Francolinus erckelii*, White-cheeked Turaco *Tauraco leucotis*, Blue-breasted Bee-eater *Merops* (*variegatus*) *lafresnayii*, White-rumped Babbler *Turdoides leucopygia* and Brown-rumped Seedeater *Serinus tristriatus*. Other forest species found at their northernmost limits in Africa include African Olive Pigeon *Columba arquatrix* (recently discovered in Eritrea; Anderson 2010) Narina's Trogon *Apaloderma narina*, Ethiopian Boubou *Laniarius* (*a.*) *aethiopicus*, African Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis*, Northern Puffback *Dryoscopus gambensis*, Brown Woodland Warbler *Phylloscopus umbrovirens* and White-crested Helmetshrike *Prionops plumatus*. Several larger mammals also occur in these forests, including Leopard *Panthera pardus*, Black-backed Jackal *Canis mesomelas*, African Civet *Civettictis civetta*, Greater Kudu *Tragelaphus strepsiceros*, Bushbuck *Tragelaphus scriptus*, Common Warthog *Phacochoerus africanus*, Bush Pig *Potamochoerus larvatus*, Sacred Baboon *Papio hamadryas*, Grivet Monkey *Cercopithecus* (*aethiops*) *aethiops* and Crested Porcupine *Hystrix cristata* (mammal taxonomy follows Kingdon 2003). Given the new road passing through it, Filfil is easily accessed and ecotourism is definitely possible, providing the forest is safeguarded.

Hawatsu Copse (14°53'06"N 39°20'24"E; 2,330 m)

Not currently included in any Important Bird Area (Fishpool & Evans 2001). This is a small area of woodland in Adi Keih sub-zone, located in a small gorge with a permanent water supply upstream of the reservoir at Hawatsu (Fig. 8). There are *c*.3–4 ha of scattered native woodland here, both open and closed, including several stands of mature trees, including *Ficus* and *Juniperus procera*. The trees have been preserved due to the presence of a Christian pilgrimage site and a small church (Enda Awbune Hariya). The locals are fearful of cutting down the trees or disturbing the wildlife due to the area's religious significance. Despite its tiny size, the copse supports the following Abyssinian endemics: Wattled Ibis (roosts here, may nest on the cliffs above the gorge), Black-winged Lovebird, Banded Barbet, Abyssinian Woodpecker (recorded nearby, nest holes in *Juniperus procera* indicate it may breed in the copse), Rüppell's Black Chat, Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher (breeds here) and White-billed Starling. It also supports the following near-endemics: Erckel's Francolin, White-cheeked Turaco, Blue-breasted Bee-eater, White-rumped Babbler, Abyssinian Black Wheatear *Oenanthe* (*lugens*) *lugubris*, Swainson's Sparrow *Passer swainsonii* and Brown-rumped Seedeater. Whilst the pilgrimage site will probably protect most of the larger trees, there is small-scale harvesting at the edges of the copse which, combined with heavy grazing, mean that over time the trees could fail to regenerate. With protection, the copse would quickly regenerate and could extend over nearby hillsides to safeguard these important bird species. Ease of access to the main road also makes it a perfect place to promote ecotourism in Eritrea.

Karibosa (14°54'50"N 39°25'15"E; 2,500 m)

Not currently included in any Important Bird Area (Fishpool & Evans 2001). This is a small isolated Saaho village in Adi Keih sub-zone *c*.8 km further north along the dirt road from the famous archaeological site of Qohaito. The village lies in a hanging valley with several permanent streams. Along the streams, a significant number of native tree species have been preserved in *c*.4 ha of riparian woodland, including: *Ficus thonningii*, *F. vastus*, *Bersama a. abyssinica*, *Olea europaea*, *Rhus glutinosa abyssinica* and *Juniperus procera*. Steep cliffs around the valley harbour several of the cliff-nesting Abyssinian endemics, which may breed there. The woodland has probably been preserved due to the low human population, which traditionally migrated to the lowlands for several months of the year, combined with the plentiful water supply, which permits new trees to grow and coppiced trees to regenerate. We suspect that there has been a recent small increase in harvesting, mainly to produce charcoal for sale. This is a gradual threat to the forest here and the trees require protection if the Abyssinian endemics are to remain. It supports the following endemics: White-collared Pigeon, Black-winged Lovebird (breeding confirmed), Banded Barbet (probably breeding), Rüppell's Black Chat, Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher, White-backed Black Tit and White-billed Starling (breeding confirmed nearby). The following near-endemics also occur: Erckel's Francolin, White-cheeked Turaco, Blue-breasted Bee-eater, White-rumped Babbler, Abyssinian Black Wheatear, Swainson's Sparrow and Brown-rumped Seedeater. In addition, Montane Nightjar *Caprimulgus poliocephalus* is found here (recently discovered in Eritrea; Anderson 2010), along with Verreaux's Eagle Owl *Bubo lacteus*, Slender-billed Starling *Onychognathus tenuirostris* (both rare in Eritrea) and African Olive Pigeon. Whilst it is only accessible with a 4 × 4 vehicle, given the site's proximity to the Axumite archaeological site of Qohaito, Karibosa would also be a suitable place for the promotion of ecotourism in Eritrea.

Acknowledgements

We thank Nigel Redman, Guy Kirwan and Ron Demey for their invaluable guidance, including detailed comments and recommendations on this paper, as well as John Atkins and Giuseppe De Marchi, for their comments on various drafts. Sue Edwards helped identify plant species. Owen Davies helped with the identification of the *Cisticola* skin at Tring. Mark Adams, Senior Curator at the Natural History Museum, Tring, permitted access to specimens, and Nigel Collar and Michel Ottaviani proffered other assistance.

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Rare birds in Morocco: report of the Moroccan Rare Birds Committee (2007–09)

Patrick Bergier[a], *Jacques Franchimont*[b], *Michel Thévenot*[c] *and the Moroccan Rare Birds Committee*[d]

Les oiseaux rares au Maroc : rapport de la Commission d'Homologation Marocaine (2007–09). Après les quatre premières synthèses triennales parues dans le Bulletin de l'African Bird Club (Bergier *et al.* 2000b, 2002b, 2005b, 2009c), ce nouveau rapport détaille les 252 données analysées entre 2007 et 2009, dont 222 ont été acceptées soit un taux d'acceptation de 88%. Les rapports annuels correspondants ont été publiés dans *Go-South Bulletin* (Bergier *et al.* 2008, 2009b, 2010a).

Quinze espèces / sous-espèces ont été signalées pour la première fois au Maroc. Il s'agit des taxons suivants : Fou masqué *Sula dactylatra*, Frégate sp. *cf.* superbe *Fregata* sp. *cf. magnificens*, Héron pâle *Ardea monicae*, Milan noir d'Egypte *Milvus aegyptius*, Vautour de Rüppell *Gyps rueppelli*, Gravelot de Leschenault *Charadrius leschenaultii*, Goéland dominicain *Larus dominicanus vetula*, Alouette de Dunn *Eremalauda dunni*, Pipit à dos olive *Anthus hodgsoni*, Grive obscure *Turdus obscurus*, Prinia à front écailleux *Spiloptila clamans*, Fauvette de Moltoni *Sylvia* (*cantillans*) *moltonii*, Pie-grièche méridionale (sous-espèce nominale) *Lanius m. meridionalis*, Etourneau roselin *Sturnus roseus* et Moineau doré *Passer luteus*. A noter que, parmi ces espèces nouvelles, trois se sont avérées être reproductrices dans le sud du pays : le Goéland dominicain s'est installé depuis 2006 sur la côte atlantique, et sa nidification a été prouvée en 2009 à Khnifiss. Les deux autres ont été trouvées dans l'intérieur de la région saharienne d'Oued Ad-Deheb sur la route d'Aousserd : l'Alouette de Dunn dont la nidification a été prouvée dès 2007 et le Prinia à front écailleux dont la reproduction très probable en 2008 a été prouvée en 2009. D'autre part, les mentions du Pipit à dos olive et de grive obscure représentent, quant à elles, les premières données de ces espèces à l'échelle africaine. Nous enregistrons également, au cours de la période considérée, le deuxième Aigle pomarin *Aquila pomarina*, les quatrièmes Pélican blanc *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, Gravelot pâtre *Charadrius pecuarius* et Mouette de Franklin *Larus pipixcan*, les sixièmes Bernache cravant *Branta bernicla* (dont le premier individu de la sous-espèce *hrota* à ventre pâle), Océanite frégate *Pelagodroma marina*, Talève d'Allen *Porphyrio alleni*, Mouette atricille *Larus atricilla* et Bouvreuil pivoine *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, les sixième et septième Mouettes à tête grise *Larus cirrocephalus*, enfin les septième et huitième Goélands à ailes blanches *Larus glaucoides*.

The initial four triennial reports of the Moroccan Rare Birds Committee (MRBC) appeared in *Bull. ABC* in 2000, 2002, 2005 and 2009. This fifth report includes 252 records for 2007–09 (see Table 1). Some 222 were accepted (acceptance rate 88%), including 15 taxa new for Morocco: Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*, (Magnificent?) Frigatebird *Fregata* sp. *cf. magnificens*, Pallid Heron *Ardea* (*cinerea*) *monicae*, Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius*, Rüppell's Vulture *Gyps rueppelli*, Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*, Kelp (Cape) Gull *Larus dominicanus vetula*, Dunn's Lark *Eremalauda dunni*, Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*, Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus*, Cricket Warbler *Spiloptila clamans*, Moltoni's Warbler *Sylvia* (*cantillans*) *moltonii*, Southern Grey Shrike (nominate race) *Lanius m. meridionalis*, Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* and Sudan Golden Sparrow *Passer luteus*. Three of these new species have been proven to breed in the south of the country. Kelp Gull has appeared since 2006 along the country's southern Atlantic coast, and breeding was proven at Khnifiss in 2009 (Bergier *et al.* 2009a). The two other species occur inland in the Saharan region of Oued Ad-Deheb on the Aousserd road: breeding by Dunn's Lark was first proven there in 2007 (Copete *et al.* 2008), while Cricket Warbler was considered very likely breeding in 2008 (T. Pettersson *et al. in* Thévenot & Bergier 2008b) and was proven in 2009 (L. G. R. Evans *et al. in* Bergier *et al.* 2010b). On the other hand, Olive-backed Pipit and Eyebrowed Thrush represent the first records in Africa. Also noteworthy are the second Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*, the fourth Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius* and Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan*, the sixth Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* (including the first mention of the pale-bellied race *hrota*), White-faced Storm-petrel *Pelagodroma marina*, Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrio alleni*, Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* and Eurasian Bullfinch *Pyrrhula*

pyrrhula, the sixth and seventh Grey-headed Gulls *Larus cirrocephalus*, and the seventh and eighth Iceland Gulls *L. glaucoides*. Annual reports for the period were published in *Go-South Bulletin* (Bergier *et al.* 2008, 2009b, 2010a).

The updated list of species considered by MRBC is available at http://www.go-south.org and includes true vagrants (i.e. species with <30 records) and rare or little-known species whose current status is inadequately known. We strongly urge visiting birdwatchers to submit descriptions of relevant species to the MRBC Secretary: Prof. Jacques Franchimont, Quartier Abbas Lemsaadi, rue n°6, n°22, 50.000 Meknès V.N., Morocco; e-mail: j.franchimont@menara.ma

Presentation of data

The presentation of data follows the pattern of MRBC reports for 1995–97, 1998–2000, 2001–03 and 2004–06 (Bergier *et al.* 2000b, 2002b, 2005b, 2009c). For all species, the following sequence has been used:

- English and scientific names
- Status according to the following codes:

RB	Resident
MB	Migrant breeder
OB	Occasional breeder
FB	Former breeder
PM	Passage migrant
WV	Winter visitor
OW	Occasional winter visitor, otherwise migrant (MB, PM)
AV	Accidental visitor (<30 records)
F(AV)	Former accidental visitor (not recorded since 1899)
?	Indicates doubt concerning status

- Details of: year, MRBC file number, region (see map), site, number of birds (one unless otherwise stated), age, sex, other data if applicable, date(s) of observation, and recorder(s) name(s)
- Comments

For accidentals, six numbers in brackets follow the status code. The first two indicate the number of records in the files of the Centrale Ornithologique Marocaine prior to the formation of MRBC, and the number of birds involved (except those records subsequently examined by the MRBC). The second pair indicates the number of records accepted by MRBC and published in previous triennial reports, and the number of birds involved. The last pair indicates the number of records accepted by MRBC in 2007–09, and the number of birds involved. For rare or little-known species, only the two last pairs are presented. The systematic list follows the sequence of species for which details are required by MRBC (www.go-south.org/lists/liste_oiseaux_maroc_annexe4.pdf).

List of accepted records

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* AV (4/14, 1/1, 4/16)

2006 (06/60) **Zaërs**, Salé beach, first-winter, 23–30 November, photo (N. Aransay)

2006 (06/62) **Tarfaya**, Khnifiss lagoon, six, 10 March (A. C. Lees & R. D. Moores)

2007 (07/62) **Tarfaya**, Khnifiss lagoon, 21 March (T. A. Olsen, K. S. Olsen, H. Hveding & K. Bekkeli)

2008 (08/55) **Tarfaya**, Khnifiss lagoon, eight adults, 19 February (T. Pettersson, K. Mild & P. Waern)

There are 12 sightings for Morocco, all but one referring to the dark-bellied race *bernicla*. Record 06/60 refers to pale-bellied *hrota*. Radi *et al.* (2009) listed other sightings at Khnifiss in 2007–08, unfortunately not submitted to the MRBC, and presented a synthesis of the occurrence of the species in Morocco. An additional record of a juvenile at Oualidia on 18 December 2007 (Y. Kaiser *et al.*) is not mentioned in Radi *et al.* (2009).

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator* WV (-/-, 5/10, 2/2)

2007 (07/19) **Souss**, Souss estuary, female, 27 March (D. Watson & E. Allchin)

2008 (08/03) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Sebkha Bou-Areg, adult female, 8 January, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)

That at the Souss estuary was first seen on 16 January (A. Green *in* www.go-south.org) and was then seen by many birdwatchers until 27 March, the latest date for this species on the Atlantic coast (Thévenot *et al.* 2003).

Rif
I.1 Tangier Peninsula
I.2 Jbala
I.3 High Rif
I.4 Southern Rif
I.5 Eastern Rif

North Atlantic Plains & Hills
II.1 Rharb
II.2 Prérif
II.3 Saïs
II.4 Zemmour
II.5 Zaër

Middle Atlantic Plains & Plateaux
III.1 Chaouïa
III.2 Doukkala
III.3 Abda
III.4 Chiadma
III.5 Plateau des Phosphates
III.6 Tadla
III.7 Rehamna
III.8 Srarhna
III.9 Haouz & Jbilet

Central Plateau
IV Central Plateau

Milddle Atlas
V.1 Western Middle Atlas
V.2 Eastern Middle Atlas

High Atlas
VI.1 Haha
VI.2 Western High Atlas
VI.3 Central High Atlas
VI.4 Eastern High Atlas

Eastern Morocco
VII.1 Plains of Eastern Morocco
VII.2 Hills of Eastern Morocco
VII.3 High Moulouya
VII.4 Middle Moulouya
VII.5 High Plateaux
VII.6 Saharan Atlas

Souss
VIII Souss

Anti-Atlas
IX.1 Western Anti-Atlas
IX.2 Central Anti-Atlas
IX.3 Eastern Anti-Atlas
IX.4 Sarhro

East Saharan Morocco
X.1 South Eastern Sahara
X.2 Tafilalt
X.3 Dadès-Draa
X.4 Middle Draa

West Saharan Morocco
XI.1 Lower Draa
XI.2 Tarfaya
XI.3 Saquiat Al-Hamra
XI.4 Oued Ad-Deheb

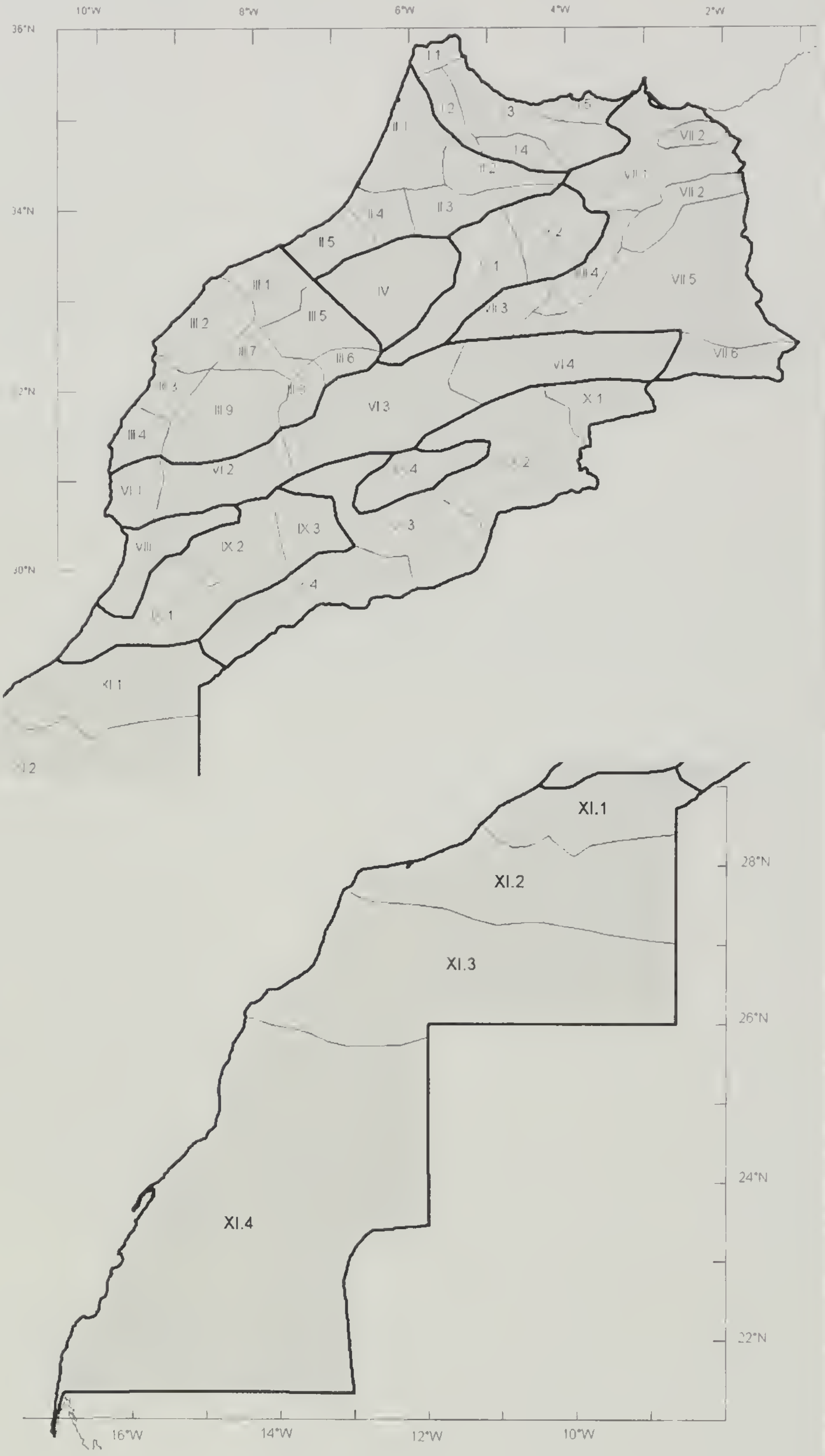


Figure 1. Map showing the regions of Morocco used in this report.
Carte délimitant les régions du Maroc utilisées dans ce rapport.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* AV (9/13, 10/13, 1/1)

2008 (08/29) **Tangier Peninsula**, Mdiq, male, 19 February (M. Amezian & I. R. Thompson)

Twentieth record for Morocco, on a date and place consistent with the usual pattern.

Two other records of singles at Smir marsh in May 2007 and February 2008 (K. Bensusan, I. R. Thompson, M. Amezian, C. Perez, J. Cortes) have not been submitted.

White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* WV, OB, PM? (-/-, 10/19, 8/25)

2004 (04/45) **Rharb**, Sidi Bou-Rhaba, juvenile male or female, 26 December, photo (L. Bassin *et al.*)

2006 (06/33) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Moulouya estuary, four females and three young, 22 October, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)

2007 (07/42) **Rharb**, Sidi Bou-Rhaba, female or juvenile, 5 November (B. Maire)

2007 (07/47) **Rharb**, Sidi Bou-Rhaba, female or immature, 18 November, photo (B. Maire)

2008 (08/04) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Arabet, adult male, 7 January, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)

2008 (08/06) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Arabet, two adult males, 12 January, photo (D. Jerez Abad *et al.*)

2008 (08/40) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Sebkha Fida Ameziane, Nador, one male and three adult females, 9 November (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)

2009 (09/07) **Rharb**, Sidi Bou-Rhaba, three adult males, 14 March, photo (I. Cherkaoui *et al.*)

2009 (09/44) **Rharb**, Sidi Bou-Rhaba, four adult males and one female, 3 April, photo (F. Ducry & P. Zeller)

2009 (09/53) **Rharb**, Sidi Bou-Rhaba, two adult males, 17 May, photo (I. Cherkaoui)

First record at the Moulouya estuary, where five were still present on 1 November 2006 (V. Schollaert). At Sidi Bou-Rhaba there are only three previous records: two mentioned by Thévenot *et al.* (2003) and one acceped in 2004 (Bergier *et al.* 2007). Future breeding is possible as sightings have recently increased dramatically. In Morocco, White-headed Duck is known to breed only at Douyièt where breeding has occurred almost regularly since 2000.

White-headed × Ruddy Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* × *O. jamaicensis* (0/0, 5/9, 1/1)

2009 (09/08) **Rharb**, Sidi Bou-Rhaba, adult male, 14 March, photo (I. Cherkaoui *et al.*)

The first record of a hybrid since 1998 (Bergier *et al.* 2000a, 2000b).

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* PM, OW (-/-, 2/79+, 2/301+)

2006 (06/59) **Souss**, off Agadir, 300+, 29 December, photo (Avifauna / S. Arvidsson)

2008 (08/11) **Doukkala**, between Azemmour and El Jadida, stranded, 6 January, photo (Mn & Mme Ménahèze *fide* B. Maire)

A record number off Agadir: Manx Shearwater is probably common along the Atlantic coast in late autumn and winter but remains under-recorded. In the same area and year (2006), the species was also seen—albeit in smaller numbers—by A. Blomdahl in November (one in the harbour on 16th and seven offshore on 29th) and by J. Lidster & B. Bland in early December (one offshore on 2nd). In 2007, one was at Cap Rhir on 18 February (S. Sorensen & J. Speich) and 50 off Agadir on 8 November (B. Bland). The bird in Doukkala was found dead after a week of strong winds and rain.

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* PM, OW (-/-, 0/0, 1/1)

2006 (06/50) **Souss**, 6 km offshore, north-west of Agadir, adult, 23 August (F. Jiguet)

First record of a Wilson's Storm-petrel for many years and the first analysed by the MRBC. Place and date consistent with the migration of this species, which moves south to its breeding grounds in August to November (Thévenot *et al.* 2003).

White-faced Storm-petrel *Pelagodroma marina* AV (4/33+, 1/1, 1/3+)

2006 (06/41) **Souss**, off Agadir, at least three, 29 June (P. & C. Crouzet)

Patricia & Claude Crouzet organise fishing tours off Agadir and regularly see these 'grey-backed little birds that walk on the water'. Jiguet (2007) described these records. The only previous record analysed by the MRBC was also off Agadir, on 31 March 1997 (Bergier *et al.* 2000a).

Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

2006 (06/26) **Tarfaya**, between Tantan Plage and Oued Chebeika, near-adult, 16 January (R. Baeta *et al.*)

A record of *c.*10 off Oued Ad-Deheb, on 10 May 1947 (Bierman & Voous 1950), was subsequently rejected (Oreel & Voous 1974). Two adults or subadults were reported from a ferry en route between Madeira and Malaga, *c.*300 nautical miles west of Casablanca (Morocco) on 9 November 2002. The nearest colonies are in the West Indies (2,500 pairs) and on islands in the South Atlantic (5,000 pairs: Carboneras 1992). There are just five records of Masked Booby in the Western Palearctic: two in Spain (10 October and 14 December 1986, in Andalucia, near Cadiz and Malaga, perhaps the same bird), and another in French / Spanish waters on 3 September 2003 in the Gulf of Gasgogne / Biscay (http://www.ornithomedia.com/pratique/identif/ident_art37_2.htm; Frémont & CHN 2005, de Juana 2006); these are the only European records. The fifth Western Palearctic record is from the eastern Mediterranean, off Israel (an adult on 16 July 2004: http://www.israbirding.com/irdc/bulletins/bulletin_6/).

Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* AV (2/2, 1/1, 1/1)

2003 (03/39) **Tangier Peninsula**, Oued Alian estuary, Tangier, adult, 11 September (J. Ramírez Román *et al.*)

This bird had just arrived from Spain and a wild origin is not certain. Great White Pelican is almost annual on the Spanish side of the Strait, either alone or in small groups (up to seven in September 2006), or mixed with White Storks *Ciconia ciconia.*

(Magnificent?) Frigatebird *Fregata* sp. *cf. magnificens* AV? (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

2009 (09/54) **Souss**, Massa, adult female, 10 April (A. Siegmund & D. Masur)

First mention of a frigatebird in Morocco. Although Magnificent Frigatebird is the most likely, the description did not permit the MRBC to positively identify the bird to species.

Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* PM, WV, RB/BM ? (-/-, 4/4, 9/9)

2006 (06/46) **Souss**, Massa estuary, 30 December (D. Bryant)

2007 (07/26) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos marshes, 15 April (B. Maire & J.-M. Maculet)

2007 (07/29) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos marshes, adult, 21 March (T. Gullick)

2007 (07/35) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos marshes, adult, 8 April (I. Cherkaoui & J. del Hoyo)

2007 (07/46) **Rharb**, Tahadart marshes, 8 November (M. Amezian & I. R. Thomson)

2008 (08/13) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Moulouya estuary, 16 March, photo (M. Boumaaza)

2008 (08/30) **Tangier Peninsula**, Mdiq, 19 February (M. Amezian *et al.*)

2009 (09/02) **Rharb**, Merja Bargha, adult, 27 January (A. Qninba *et al.*)

2009 (09/10) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos marshes, adult, 30 March (I. Cherkaoui)

Fourth record at Massa, and second in winter there (Thévenot *et al.* 2003, Bergier *et al.* 2004).

Breeding recorded at the Lower Loukkos marshes in the late 19th century (Irby 1895) but the species dramatically declined during the 1970s (Pineau & Giraud-Audine 1979), before recovering during the 1980s and 1990s (Thévenot *et al.* 2003) and there are now at least a dozen booming males (Qninba *et al.* 2008).

Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis* AV (18/19, 2/2, 2/2)

2009 (09/21) **Chiadma**, Essaouira, 18 April, photo (T. Todorov)

2009 (09/23) **Souss**, Souss estuary, 1 April (P. Dhaluin *et al.*)

These two were of the dark morph.

Great Egret *Egretta alba* WV, PM (-/-, 31/55, 33/65+)

2005 (05/48) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos marshes, two adults, 20 March, photo (O. Fontaine & F. Bouzendorff)

2006 (06/29) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos marshes, 4–10 September, photo (GOMAC)

2006 (06/30) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Mohamed V, four adults, 17 September (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)

2006 (06/32) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Mechra Homadi, adult, 1 October, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)

2006 (06/36) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Arabet, 5 November, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)
2006 (06/66) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos marshes, 26 March (A. B. van den Berg)
2007 (07/03) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Mohamed V, four, 14 January (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)
2007 (07/04) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Mechra Homadi, four, 21 January (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)
2007 (07/11) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos marshes, 28 January, photo (GOMAC)
2007 (07/12) **Doukkala**, Sidi Moussa–Oualidia, 1 March (B. Maire *et al.*)
2007 (07/21) **Doukkala**, Sidi Moussa–Oualidia, adult, 31 March (D. Jerez Abad *et al.*)
2007 (07/22) **Dadès-Draa**, Barrage Mansour Eddahbi, 2 January (O. Bondesson *et al.*)
2007 (07/25) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos marshes, 1–2, 15 April, photo (B. Maire *et al.*)
2007 (07/37) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Mohammed V, seven adults, 30 September, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)
2007 (07/39) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Arabet, two adults, 14 October, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)
2007 (07/41) **Rharb**, Larache, five, 21 October, photo (B. Maire *et al.*)
2007 (07/50) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Mohamed V, two adults, 21 December, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)
2007 (07/58) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos marshes, 4+, 14 March (T. A. Olsen *et al.*)
2007 (07/65) **Tangier Peninsula**, Mdiq, 9 November (I. R. Thompson & M. Amezian)
2008 (08/01) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Arabet, adult, 7 January, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)
2008 (08/02) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Sebkha Bou-Areg, two adults, 7 January, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)
2008 (08/05) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Arabet, adult, 12 January (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)
2008 (08/07) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Sebkha Bou-Areg, three adults, 12 January, photo (D. Jerez Abad *et al.*)
2008 (08/08) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Sebkha Bou-Areg, adult, 2 January, photo (I. Cherkaoui)
2008 (08/12) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Mechra Homadi, two adults, 20 March, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)
2008 (08/16) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos marshes, three, 11 March, photo (H. van Diek)
2008 (08/42) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Moulouya estuary, adult, 23 November (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)
2008 (08/43) **Rharb**, Larache, 7 November (B. Maire)
2008 (08/46) **Tafilalt**, Dayet Srij, Merzouga, adult, 19 November, photo (M. Gerber *et al.*)
2008 (08/50) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Mohamed V, adult, 18 December, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)
2009 (09/01) **Saquiat Al Hamra**, Barrage de Layoune, two adults, 6 January (A. Qninba, M. Radi & A. El Idrissi Essougrati)
2009 (09/15) **Dadès-Draa**, Barrage Mansour Eddahbi, 31 March (A. B. van den Berg *et al.*)
2009 (09/31) **Doukkala**, Oualidia, adult, 2 January (J. H. Hansen)

Great Egret is now regular in northern Morocco. Following the synthesis by Thévenot & Bergier (2008a), records to the north of a line El Jadida–Oujda are no longer considered by MRBC (decision of 12 November 2007).

Sightings in desert areas of Morocco remain scarce. At Barrage de Layoune, two were present in December 2007–January 2008 (Y. Kayser, M. Radi & A. El Idrissi), the southernmost locality where the species has been seen in Morocco to date (Thévenot & Bergier 2008a).

Pallid Heron *Ardea* (*cinerea*) *monicae* AV (0/0, 0/0, 2/2)
2009 (09/43) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Hoja Llamera, Dakhla Bay, 20 February–22 May, photo (http://www.birdforum.net/showthread.php?s=6c0cf0e2d4dfcf3b747f1fe1ccdbafb6&t=137850, P. Vantieghem *et al.*, P. Bergier)
2009 (09/49) **Tarfaya**, Khnifiss, 23 April (P. Adriaens *et al.*)

First Moroccan record of this species endemic to the Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania.

Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)
2008 (08/20) **Central High Atlas**, Tizi-n'Tichka, 8 April, photo (A. B. van den Berg)

First record for Morocco and north-west Africa. The bird originated from eastern Africa (*M. a. aegyptius*) rather than from western Africa (*M. a. parasitus*) (*per* D. Forsman).

Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus* RB (-/-, 2/2, 7/10)

2007 (07/27) **Western High Atlas**, Sidi Chamarouch, two adults, 29 May (J. Oates)

2007 (07/31) **Western High Atlas**, Jbel Toubkal, June 2007, photo (G. Adellach)

2008 (08/52) **Western High Atlas**, Oukaïmeden, adult, 29 December (M. Tingley)

2009 (09/12) **Western High Atlas**, Oukaïmeden, pair, 20 April, photo (T. Todorov & R. El Khamlichi)

2009 (09/19) **Western High Atlas**, Oukaïmeden, adult, 6 April, photo (A. B. van den Berg *et al.*)

2009 (09/50) **Western High Atlas**, Oukaïmeden, adult, 4 May, photo (A. Mayence)

2009 (09/51) **Western High Atlas**, Oukaïmeden, pair, 1 May, photo (P. Vantieghem *et al.*)

All these records are from the Toubkal–Oukaimeden area, especially the ski resort of Oukaïmeden. The species is Critically Endangered in Morocco where it survives in just two areas, the Toubkal–Oukaimeden massif (Western High Atlas) and the Mgoun-Tessaoute massif (Central High Atlas). Numbers are small but seem to have recently increased in the Toubkal–Oukaimeden massif, where the appearance of new pairs in well-frequented areas, such as the ski resort at Oukaïmeden, has resulted in a large increase in sightings.

Rüppell's Vulture *Gyps rueppelli* AV/PM? (0/0, 0/0, 2/2)

2002 (02/40) **Tangier Peninsula**, Jbel Moussa, young, 18 June (J. Ramírez Román & S. Solís Gómez)

2006 (06/71) **Tangier Peninsula**, Jbel Moussa, young, 24 August (J. Ramírez Román *et al.*)

First records submitted to the MRBC. Dies *et al.* (2008) report an immature on 27 May, two others on 29 May and up to five on 15 June 2006, with Griffon Vultures *Gyps fulvus* at Ceuta, waiting for favourable weather to cross the Strait of Gibraltar.

Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus* AV, FB (13/16, 0/0, 1/1)

2003 (03/38) **Tangier Peninsula**, Punta Ceres, young, 5 September (J. Ramírez Román *et al.*)

First record accepted by the MRBC. The nearest breeding population, in Spain, is largely sedentary but individuals occasionally wander to Morocco, more exceptionally further south.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* AV (24/30+, 3/3, 2/2)

2008 (08/27) **Oued Ad Deheb**, 50 km north of Dakhla crossroads, adult male, 29 February (M. Thévenot & P. Bergier)

2009 (09/45) **Tafilalt**, Goulmima, adult male, 23 March, photo (F. Ducry & P. Zeller)

Fourth and fifth records analysed by the MRBC on dates consistent with the spring migration pattern through the western Mediterranean. Most sightings refer to males, which are more easily identified than females / immatures.

Dark Chanting Goshawk *Melierax metabates* RB (-/-, 2/2, 1/1)

2006 (06/47) **Souss**, between Oulad Teima and Taroudant, adult, 31 December (D. Bryant)

Seventh record analysed by the MRBC but only the third to be accepted. All three are from the Souss plain, the unique region where the species possibly still breeds.

In spring 2007, a team of five Spanish birders thoroughly searched for the species in the Souss but failed to find it (J. L. Copete *et al.*).

Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax* RB (-/-, 10/11, 2/2)

2006 (06/27) **Tarfaya**, 15 km south of Tantan Plage, third- or fourth-year, 18 January, photo (R. Baeta *et al.*)

2006 (06/38) **Souss**, Massa estuary, juvenile or second-year, 28 October (D. Walsh, A. Gregory & Gullivers Natural History Holidays)

Typical records of immatures on post-breeding dispersal.

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* AV (0/0, 1/1, 1/1)

2007 (07/68) **Tangier Peninsula**, Punta Ceres, adult / subadult, 14 September (J. Ramírez Román *et al.*)

Second Moroccan record following that at Merzouga in 1996 (Bergier *et al.* 1997). In 2008, very small numbers in spring and autumn, were detected on the Spanish side of the Strait of Gibraltar (Onrubia *et al.* 2009a).

Spanish Imperial Eagle *Aquila adalberti* AV, FB, OB (-/-, 0/0, 2/2)

2006 (06/63) **Lower Draa**, 11 km west-northwest of Tantan, second-year, 16 December 2006 and 8 February 2007, photo (C. Batty *et al.*, M. Lopez *et al.*)

2007 (07/67) **Tangier Peninsula**, Punta Ceres, first-year, 14 September (J. Ramírez Román *et al.*)

Spanish Imperial Eagle is largely sedentary but a few immatures cross the Strait and occasionally migrate as far south as tropical West Africa (González & Oria 2004).

First records accepted by the MRBC. The Lower Draa sighting is the southernmost certain record in Morocco; many previous sightings in desert areas were not accepted by Thevenot *et al.* (2003) due to the possibility of confusion with young Tawny Eagle which recalls young Spanish Imperial Eagle.

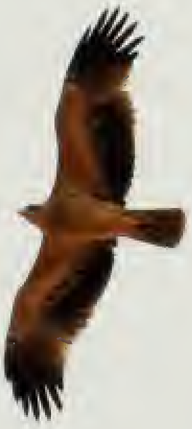


Figure 2. Second-year Spanish Imperial Eagle *Aquila adalberti*, near Tantan, 8 February 2007 (M. Read). The southernmost certain record in Morocco.

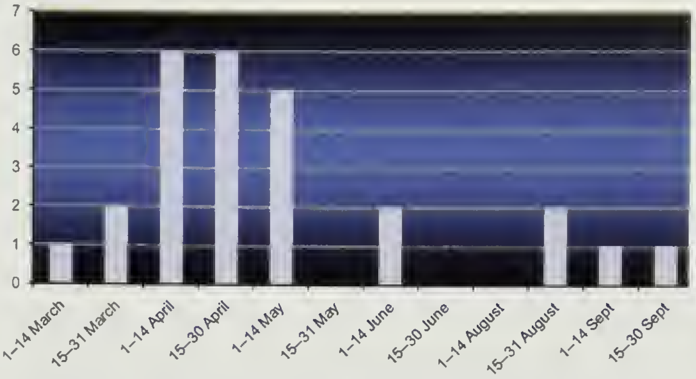
Aigle ibérique *Aquila adalberti* de deuxième année, près de Tantan, 8 février 2007 (M. Read). La donnée la plus méridionale au Maroc.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* AV (18/*c.*29, 4/5, 1/5)

2006 (06/40) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Melilla, three adult males and two females, 16 April (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)

Six other possible Red-footed Falcons accompanied these birds but could not be identified with certainty.

Most of the 26 Moroccan records (including three not submitted to the MRBC) are from April and early May. The earliest is from 17 March. Only four are from autumn.



Number of records of Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* in Morocco by fortnight (n=26)

Barbary Falcon *Falco pelegrinoides* RB poorly known (-/-, 60/70+, 22/23)

2004 (04/46) **Doukkala**, Cap Beddouza, adult, 27 December, photo (L. Bassin *et al.*)

2004 (04/47) **Haha**, Tamri, adult, 28 December, photo (L. Bassin *et al.*)

2004 (04/48) **Haha**, Tamri, adult, 7 November, photo (A. B. van den Berg)

2006 (06/39a) **Souss**, Agadir Kasbah, adult, 23 October (D. Walsh, A. Gregory & Gullivers Natural History Holidays)

2006 (06/39b) **Haha**, Paradise Valley, Immouzer Ida-Ou-Tanane, adult, 27 October (D. Walsh, A. Gregory & Gullivers Natural History Holidays)

2006 (06/51) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Saïdia, adult, 2 November, photo (V. Adriaens, V. Schollaert *et al.*)

2006 (06/65) **Dadès-Draa**, east of Ouarzazate, immature, 23 January, photo (W. Price)

2007 (07/01) **Souss**, near Aoulouz, adult, 2 January (D. Bryant)

2007 (07/05) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Melilla, adult female, 16 January (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)

2007 (07/09) **Tafilalt**, Erfoud, adult, 17 February, photo (M. Altierri *et al.*)

2007 (07/17) **Dadès-Draa**, Oued Izerki near Ouarzazate, adult, 2 January, photo (O. Bondeson, I. Sandahl *et al.*)

2007 (07/20) **Haha**, Tamri, adult male, 1 April (D. Jerez Abad *et al.*)

2007 (07/53) **Dadès-Draa**, Boumalne du Dadès, adult, 23 November, photo (P. Komi)

2007 (07/54) **Haha**, Tamri, adult, 2 April, photo (A. B. van den Berg)

2008 (08/21) **Tafilalt**, Jorf, 25 March, photo (A. B. van den Berg)

2008 (08/38) **Haha**, Tamri, adult and immature, 10 October, photo (A. B. van den Berg *et al.*)

2008 (08/39a) **Eastern High Atlas**, gorges du Ziz, adult, 3 March, photo (F. Jiguet)
2008 (08/39b) **Haha**, Tamri, adult, 6 March, photo (F. Jiguet)
2008 (08/44) **Souss**, Massa, immature, 3 November, photo (J. M. Fenerole)
2008 (08/45) **Souss**, Arazane, adult, 16 November, photo (M. Gerber *et al.*)
2009 (09/14) **Souss**, Souss estuary, adult, 15 April (A. B. van den Berg *et al.*)
2009 (09/37) **Oued Ad-Dehab**, Taourta, juvenile, 20 April, photo (P. Vantieghem *et al.*)

On the Mediterranean coast near Melilla, Barbary Falcon occurs in sympatry with Peregrine *Falco peregrinus brookei.*

Andalusian Hemipode (Common Buttonquail) *Turnix sylvaticus* RB (-/-, 1/1, 2/2)
2007 (07/33) **Doukkala**, near Oualidia, 16 September, photo (P. Dupuis, J. Franchimont & B. Maire)
2007 (07/45) **Doukkala**, near Oualidia, dead (probably a road casualty), late November (D. Ledan), photo (J. Franchimont)

That on 16 September was very tame and was discovered in a fallow field, 1 km from the ocean.

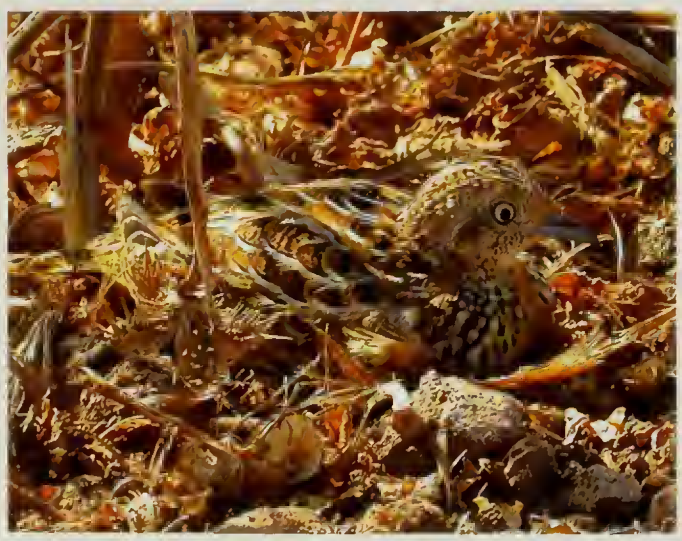


Figure 3. Andalusian Hemipode / Turnix d'Andalousie *Turnix sylvaticus*, near Oualidia, Doukkala, 16 September 2007 (B. Maire)

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana* PM, OW (-/-, 8/16+, 5/8)
2007 (07/56) **Rharb**, Sidi Bou-Rhaba, singing male, 13 March (T. A. Olsen *et al.*)
2007 (07/59) **Rharb**, Lower Loukkos marshes, two on 14 March, three on 15 March (T. A. Olsen *et al.*)
2008 (08/14) **Rharb**, Lower Loukkos marshes, two adults, 30 March (J. Franchimont & F. Touati Malih)
2008 (08/31) **Rharb**, Lower Loukkos marshes, 2 April, photo (M. Amezian & I. R. Thompson)
2008 (08/32) **Tangier Peninsula**, Mdiq, 12 March, mist-netted, photo (M. Amezian & I. R. Thompson)

Spotted Crake is a regular passage migrant (albeit much rarer in the autumn) and an occasional winter visitor. MRBC has decided to remove Spotted Crake from the list of species considered from 1 January 2009 (decision 16 November 2008).

Little Crake *Porzana parva* PM (-/-, 3/16+, 5/5)
2007 (07/08) **Dadès-Draa**, Barrage Mansour Eddahbi, adult male, 20 February (M. Altieri *et al.*)
2007 (07/16) **Tangier Peninsula**, Smir marshes, female, 26 March (M. Amezian & I. R. Thompson)
2007 (07/18) **Souss**, Aoulouz, 16 March, photo (D. Watson)
2007 (07/63) **Souss**, Massa estuary, male, 22 March, photo (T. A. Olsen *et al.*)
2009 (09/16) **Dadès-Draa**, Barrage Mansour Eddahbi, singing male, 31 March (A. B. van den Berg *et al.*)

2007 was a very good year for this rare spring migrant. In addition to the records listed in Thévenot *et al.* (2003) and the three already analysed by the MRBC, we are aware of only a few other sightings since 2000: Oued Ziz, north of Erfoud: female on 12 April 2000 (J. Fonderflick) and another on 12 February 2003 (H. Dufourny); Aoulouz: female on 14 March 2005 (A. Binns), two females on 15 March 2007 (A. Wilson) and one on 12 April 2007 (A. Impey); Barrage Mansour Eddahbi: one (perhaps two) on 18 March 2007 (S. Bird *et al.*); and at Massa: one on 14 April 2007 (A. Impey *et al.*). Breeding of this secretive species has been reported in Algeria in the 19th century (*cf.* Isenmann & Moali 2000), but has never been proved in Morocco, although occasional instances seem likely at suitable sites (*cf.* singing male at Barrage Mansour Eddahbi).

Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* PM, BM, OW (-/-, 1/1, 1/1)
2008 (08/59) **Rharb**, Larache, adult, 30 March, photo (C. Zumalacárregui *et al.*)

The bird was mist-netted (Ramírez 2009). It is only the second record analysed by the MRBC.

Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrio alleni* AV (5/5, 0/0, 1/1)

2008 (08/57) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Melilla, juvenile, 21 November, photo (D. Jerez Abad *et al.*)

All five previous records were from the Atlantic coast between Merja Zerga in the north and Massa in the south, all in December–January except one in April (Thévenot *et al.* 2003). This is the first analysed by the MRBC.

The bird hit a window in Melilla. It was very emaciated and dehydrated, with some feathers in good condition and others moulting; it was taken to the rehabilitation center 'Centro de Recuperación de Fauna El Quinto' where it died six days later.

Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax* RB, WV (-/-, 0/0, 1/1)

2008 (08/24) **Zaër**, Sidi Bettache, adult female, 13 April (S. Nawfel & I. Cherkaoui)

Stangely, this is the first record analysed by the MRBC. The bird was in a clearing within cork-oak forest; I. Cherkaoui had previously seen three in another cork-oak forest (Mamora, 16 November 2005).

Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata* RB (-/-, 0/0, 2/2)

2009 (09/17) **Tafilalt**, Merzouga, male, 30 March, photo (A. B. van den Berg *et al.*)

2009 (09/18) **Tafilalt**, Merzouga, male, 10 April, photo (A. B. van den Berg *et al.*)

Breeding in captivity has now been mastered, especially at the Emirates Centre for Wildlife Propagation at Missour. Many are released each year in eastern Morocco and Tafilalt, and in consequence Houbara should be observed more frequently in these areas.

Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius* AV (2/5, 1/1, 1/1)

2008 (08/37) **Souss**, Souss estuary, 18 April, photo (D. Young)

Fourth Moroccan record of this species from sub-Saharan Africa. This is the latest in spring and the first on the Atlantic coast. The three previous records were all inland in south-eastern pre-desert regions (Dadès-Draa and Tafilalt).

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

2006 (06/52) **Tafilalt**, Merzouga, 13 March, video (P. van Rooij *et al.*)

First Moroccan record of this eastern species, which breeds from Turkey to western China. Another sighting (Middle Atlas, 28 April 1979) is unconfirmed (Thévenot *et al.* 2003).

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima* AV (8/12, 3/4, 2/2)

2008 (08/23) **Chiadma**, Essaouira, 2 March, photo (H. van Diek)

2009 (09/22) **Tangier Peninsula**, Asilah, 24 April, photo (J. Elorriaga & C. Feijt)

Twelfth and 13th records of this accidental winter visitor: 24 April is the latest known date for Morocco.

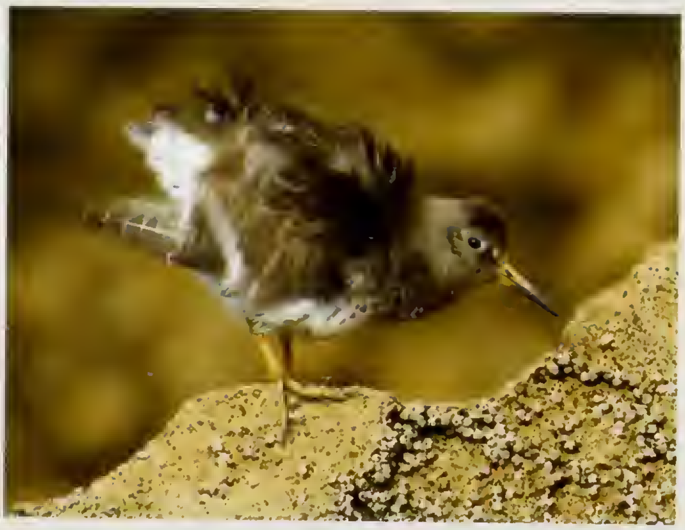
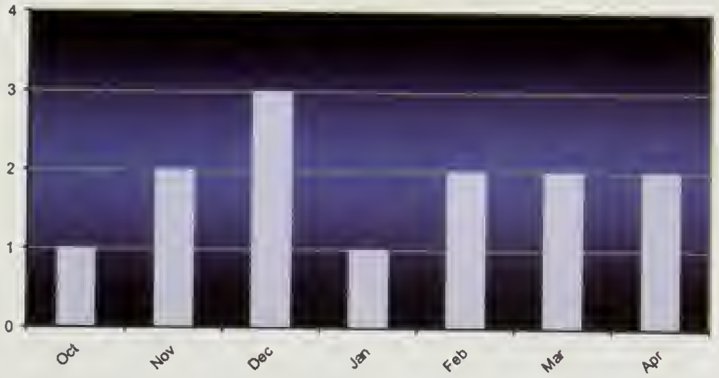


Figure 4. Purple Sandpiper / Bécasseau violet *Calidris maritima*, Essaouira, Chiadma, 2 March 2008 (H. van Diek)



Number of records of Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima* in Morocco per month (n=13)

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* AV (8/12, 4/7, 2/2)

2007 (07/64) **Souss**, Souss estuary, 22 March, photo (T. A. Olsen *et al.*)

(07/15) **Souss**, Souss estuary, 23 March, photo (S. Bird *et al.*)

These two records probably involve the same bird. Eight of the 13 Moroccan records are from the Souss estuary. Broad-billed Sandpiper is more often observed during spring migration (eight records: 23 March–18 May) than during autumn (four records: 27 July–22 September). There are also two winter records, in January.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* PM, OW (-/-, 1/1, 1/1)

2007 (07/49) **Saïs**, near Meknès, 16 December (J. Franchimont)

First record since 1999. Great Snipe is a very rare passage migrant and winter visitor to Morocco.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* AV (9/9, 1/1, 2/2)

2007 (07/36) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Moulouya estuary, young, stranded, 17 September (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)

2007 (07/44) **Tarfaya**, Cape Juby, adult or third-year, 19 October (F. X. Macià Valverde & K. M. Van Enkhuizen)

Eleventh and 12th records for Morocco, and first verified record on the Mediterranean coast.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* AV (0/0, 3/3, 1/1)

2004 (04/49) **Saquiat Al Hamra**, Layoune, corpse, 20 January (M. van Leeuwen)

DNA analyses performed on the rotten corpse permitted identification to species level (P. de Knijff *fide* A. B. van den Berg). The three previous Moroccan records are from the Souss region (Bergier *et al.* 1996, 2007).

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini* PM, OW (-/-, 3/8, 2/35+)

2009 (09/04) **Rharb**, Merja Bargha, *c.*15, 27 January (A. Qninba *et al.*)

2009 (09/05) **Zaërs**, Oued El-Maleh estuary, Mohammedia, *c.*20, 11 February (A. Qninba & A. El Idrissi Essougrati)

Exceptional influx of birds stranded ashore after severe storms with strong westerly gales during winter 2008–09.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* AV (1/1, 4/4, 1/1)

2007 (07/40) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla, Point Sarga, 17 October, photo (F. X. Macià Valverde & K. M. Van Enkhuizen)

Sixth record for Morocco, the southernmost to date, and the first in autumn (there was previously an unconfirmed record from September: Thévenot *et al.* 2003).

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* AV (22/22, 14/18, 6/6)

2006 (06/28) **Tarfaya**, Chebeika estuary, first-winter, 18–20 January, photo (R. Baeta *et al.*)

2007 (07/61) **Souss**, Agadir harbour, second-year, 19 March, photo (T. A. Olsen *et al.*)

2007 (07/71) **Haha**, Anza, first-winter, 16–21 January, photo (A. Green *et al.*)

2007 (07/72) **Tarfaya**, Chebeika estuary, second-winter, 19 January (A. Green)

2008 (08/25) **Tarfaya**, Khnifiss lagoon, adult winter, 24 February (M. Thévenot & P. Bergier)

2008 (08/26) **Tarfaya**, Chebeika estuary, adult summer, 23 February, photo (M. Thévenot & P. Bergier)

The Khnifiss record is the southernmost to date. Approximately at the same latitude, there are some 20 records on the Canary Islands (Martín & Lorenzo 2001, Clarke 2006, de Juana 2006) and Ring-billed Gull has also been reported from Mauritania (Lamarche 1988) and Senegal (Baillon 1991).

Grey-headed Gull *Larus cirrocephalus* AV (3/3, 2/2, 2/3)

2006 (06/37) **Souss**, Massa estuary, 24 October (D. Walsh & A. Gregory)

2009 (09/52) **Souss**, Souss estuary, two adults, 19–21 May, photo (I. Cherkaoui)

Sixth and seventh records for Morocco and third at the Souss estuary. The data do not permit a clear view of the temporal pattern of this species, which has been recorded in February (one), April (one), May (three), October (one) and November (one). There are two records in Algeria (April 1981 and April 1982: Le Fur 1984, Johnson *et al.* 1990), two in Tunisia (July 1988 and August 1988: Isenmann *et al.* 2005), one in continental

Spain (Marismas of Guadalquivir, 30 June–15 August 1971: de Juana 2006) and one on the Canaries (2 February 2005: de Juana 2006, Dies *et al.* 2007). The nearest breeding colony is at Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania, where there are only a few dozen pairs. Grey-headed Gull is the commonest gull in Senegal (race *poiocephalus*) and also breeds in southern South America (race *cirrocephalus*).

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides* AV (3/3, 3/2, 3/2)

2008 (08/35) **Chiadma**, Essaouira, second-year, 4 March, photo (P. Lampila *et al.*)

2008 (08/58) **Chiadma**, Essaouira, first-winter, 2 March, photo (M. Hornman *et al.*)

2009 (09/36) **Souss**, Souss estuary, first-summer, 18 April, photo (P. Vantieghem *et al.*)

The two records at Essaouira certainly involve the same bird.

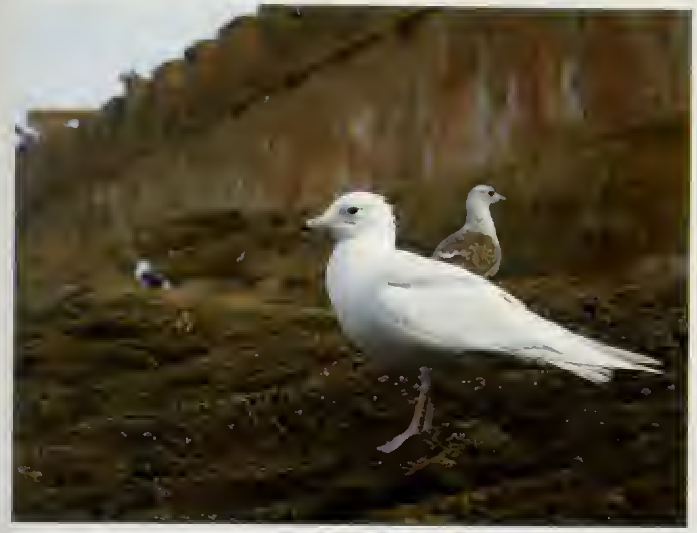


Figure 5. First-winter Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides*, Essaouira, Chiadma, 2 March 2008 (M. Hornman)

Goéland arctique *Larus glaucoides* de premier hiver, Essaouira, Chiadma, 2 mars 2008 (M. Hornman)

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* WV (-/-, 2/3, 2/2)

2006 (06/49) **Souss**, Agadir, subadult, 28 August (F. Jiguet)

2007 (07/51) **Tarfaya**, Khnifiss lagoon, third-winter / adult, 30 December (D. Bryant)

28 August is one of the earliest dates ever in Morocco. There is just one previous record at Khnifiss lagoon (P. Rock *in* Thévenot *et al.* 2003), the southernmost Moroccan record to date, but Herring Gull has been reported from the Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania (Isenmann 2006).

Kelp (Cape) Gull *Larus dominicanus vetula* AV, OB (0/0, 0/0, 3/15)

2006 (06/44) **Souss**, Agadir, adult, 28 August (F. Jiguet)

2008 (08/56) **Tarfaya**, Khnifiss lagoon, four adults, 19 February, photo (T. Pettersson, K. Mild & P. Waern)

2009 (09/47) **Tarfaya**, Khnifiss lagoon, ten adults, 23 April, photo (P. Vantieghem *et al.*)

First Moroccan records for this Southern Hemisphere gull which breeds in southern Africa, from Namibia to Cape Province and in southern Madagascar, and on southern coasts of South America, in south Australia, New Zealand, Antarctica and on subantarctic islands. Five subspecies are recognised (Jiguet 2002) with *L. d. vetula* that in southern Africa.

In the Americas, *L. d. dominicanus* has spread north and now breeds in Louisiana, USA. In Africa, *L. d. vetula* has also expanded north since the 1980s, with three breeding records in Senegal in 1980–89, and a long-stayer, paired with a Yellow-legged Gull *L. michahellis*, at Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania, in 1997–2007 at least (Pineau *et al.* 2001, Isenmann 2006). An adult (the first for the Western Palearctic) was in Paris, France, in January 1995 (Jiguet & Defos du Rau 2004), and another adult was at Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Canary Islands, in April 2001 (de Juana 2006).

The four seen at Khnifiss lagoon on 19 February 2008 formed two pairs and were displaying; three were still present five days later (Bergier & Thévenot 2008). Finally, following several records in 2009, breeding was proven in May (Bergier *et al.* 2009a).

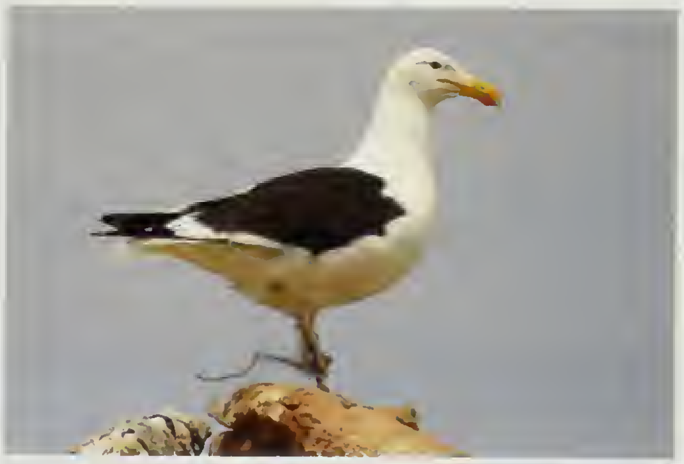


Figure 6. Kelp (Cape) Gull / Goéland dominicain *Larus dominicanus vetula*, Khnifiss lagoon, Tarfaya, 20 May 2009 (P. Bergier)

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus* WV (-/-, 5/6, 5/5)

2006 (06/48) **Souss**, Massa estuary, first-winter, 29 December (D. Bryant)

2007 (07/48) **Souss**, Anza, first-year, 2 December, photo (A. Talamelli *et al.*)

2009 (09/33) **Haha**, Anza, second-winter, 5 January (J. H. Hansen)

2009 (09/34) **Haha**, Anza, third-winter, 5–6 January (J. H. Hansen)

2009 (09/38) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla, first-summer, 20 April, photo (P. Vantieghem *et al.*)

With only ten records received by the MRBC in 1997–2009, Great Black-backed Gull is definitely a rare winter visitor to Morocco. Taking into account the sightings listed by Thévenot *et al.* (2003), the species is mainly observed in the Souss region, especially at the Souss and Massa estuaries (12+ and 6+ records respectively).

Regarding the Dakhla bird on 20 April, P. Vantieghem reported: 'Oddly, this bird already had six new primaries, which is extremely advanced. The most advanced second-cycle bird I have seen in Europe, showed two new inner primaries on 13 April, so this Moroccan bird is well ahead of schedule. Coincidentally though, I received photographs of another second-cycle Great Black-backed Gull at Dakhla, taken by D. López Velasco in early April 2007. This bird showed four new primaries already. Perhaps the desert climate is responsible for the unusually rapid moult in these birds, which are probably not used to such hot, sunny and windy conditions'.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* PM, OW (-/-, 2/2, 1/1)

2006 (06/35) **Souss**, Souss estuary, juvenile, 14 October (P. Kennerley, A. B. van den Berg *et al.*)

Arctic Tern is a rare migrant along the Moroccan Atlantic coast and is more frequent during autumn passage (32 records in late July–early November) than spring (18 records in late March–late May). Nevertheless, the species is undoubtedly under-recorded and probably less rare than shore-based observations suggest.

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii* PM (-/-, 3/5, 1/58)

2006 (06/64) **Haha**, Agadir Imoucha, 58 adults, 12 April (T. Pettersson & M. Rehnberg)

This is one of the largest groups recorded in Morocco, with *c.*50 recorded by R. de Naurois on Virginia islet off the Oued Ad-Deheb region on 30 May 1960, and the exceptional count of *c.*1,000, probably oversummering, on the same islet by the same observer on 3 August 1965 (de Naurois 1969).

Sooty / Bridled Tern *Sterna fuscata / S. anaethetus*

2005 (05/51) **Souss**, Souss estuary, adult, 25 November (R. Moss)

This bird was submitted as *S. fuscata* but the MRBC considered that doubt remains concerning the specific identification (either *S. fuscata* or *S. anaethetus*). No recent sightings of either species are available in Morocco (Thévenot *et al.* 2003).

Rosy-faced Lovebird *Agapornis roseicollis* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

2009 (09/09) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Melilla, adult, 24 March, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)

This bird was obviously an escape but it is interesting to monitor the future of such 'exotics' to see whether they become permanently established or not. This is the case for Rose-ringed Parakeet in Morocco (see below) but also for other lovebirds, e.g. in the Alpes-Maritimes, France (Dubois 2007, Jiguet & the CAF 2007).

Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* AV/ RB? (3+/5+, 3/6, 3/5)

2006 (06/45) **Chaouia**, Casablanca, adult male, 18 November (I. Cherkaoui)

2008 (08/17) **Zaër**, Rabat, adult male, 30 March, photo (I. Cherkaoui)

2009 (09/26) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Melilla, one pair and a male, 29 April, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)

At Casablanca, there was a small population in the 1990s but no recent data are available from there. At Rabat, the record submitted by I. Cherkaoui is his fourth in that city. At Melilla, where two previous records in 2004 were accepted by the MRBC (Bergier *et al.* 2005a, 2006), breeding probably occurred in 2009. The pair reported on 29 April 2009 settled at 20 m height, in the hole of a wall of a tall building near a public garden. During one hour, the male made six visits to the hole, remaining there 4–5 minutes each time. The female was only seen twice. No young were seen. A second male came close to the hole but was swiftly evicted by the female.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* WV, PM (-/-, 6/10, 5/5)

2006 (06/61) **Souss**, Souss estuary, 26 October (B. Maire & M. Hamdouch)
2007 (07/13) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Moulouya estuary, adult, 11 February (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)
2008 (08/47) **Souss**, Massa estuary, 14 November (M. Gerber *et al.*)
2008 (08/48) **Tafilalt**, Erg Chebbi, Merzouga, 19 November (M. Gerber *et al.*)
2008 (08/51) **Sarhro**, Iknioun, adult, 27 December (M. Tingley & P. Blumenshine)

First winter sighting and the only recent record in Eastern Morocco where the three previous records were also at the Moulouya estuary, in April (Brosset 1961).

There are very few records in desert areas, making the two late autumn / winter records in Tafilalt and in Sarhro remarkable: the bird at Merzouga was sheltering under a tamarisk amid tall sand dunes, and that at Iknioun was in steppe.

Black-crowned Sparrow Lark *Eremopterix nigriceps* RB/BM? (0/0, 1/16, 3/216+)

2007 (07/06) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla–Aousserd road, especially near Aousserd, 56+, 17 January, photo (L. G. R. Evans *et al.*)
2009 (09/28) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla–Aousserd road, *c.*60, 14–16 January, photo (J. H. Hansen)
2009 (09/40) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla–Aousserd road, numerous (100+), 21 April, photo (P. Vantieghem *et al.*)

Black-crowned Sparrow Lark is probably common in the savannahs that develop following rainfall in the Dakhla hinterland, especially near Aousserd. The first record analysed by MRBC was from September 1999 (Bergier *et al.* 2000c). In 2007, L. G. R. Evans *et al.* found this lark along the Aousserd road beyond km 181, then at Oued Jenna, and in increasing numbers close to Aousserd (with a group of 25+ just before the town). It was common in spring 2009. P. Vanthieghem *et al.* noted: 'even more numerous than Dunn's Lark; probably well over 100 seen, between km 110 and 186 along the Dakhla–Aousserd road. Every stop produced about 5–10 birds, and some were even seen from the car while driving'.

Dunn's Lark *Eremalauda dunni* RB/BM? (0/0, 0/0, 6/100s)

2006 (06/42) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla–Aousserd road, three, 12 March, photo (A. C. Lees & R. D. Moores)
2007 (07/07) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla–Aousserd road, two pairs at km 96, one pair at km 124, 16 January, photo (L. G. R. Evans *et al.*)
2007 (07/69) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla–Aousserd road, several hundreds, 9–11 April and 30 April, photo (R. Armada *et al.*)
2009 (09/27) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla–Aousserd road, four adults and a young, 14–15 January, photo (J. H. Hansen)
2009 (09/30) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla–Aousserd road, 20 April, photo (P. Olsson)
2009 (09/39) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla–Aousserd road, several dozen, 21 April, photo (P. Vantieghem *et al.*)

First documented records for Morocco (a previous observation on 29 April 2001 at Aousserd was not accepted by MRBC: Bergier *et al.* 2002a).

In 2006, three birds, including a male in song, were found at 22°79'N 14°61'W in a Saharo-Sahelian environment, dominated by tussocks of *Andropogon*, *Aristida*, *Lasiurus* and *Panicum*, and sparse *Acacia*, with Black-crowned Finch Larks (numerous, breeding) and Desert Sparrows *Passer simplex*. This record was described in detail by Lees & Moores (2006).

The two records in 2007 definitely proved breeding in the region. That in April 2007 involving large numbers of breeders was thoroughly detailed by Copete *et al.* (2008). The status of Dunn's Lark in Oued Ad-Deheb requires confirmation. It is probably not an accidental visitor but a localised though regular resident breeder, or an erratic breeder that keys its reproduction to rainfall, occurring only in wet years and wandering in search of more favourable areas elsewhere in Western Sahara? In any case, the breeding period may be prolonged as young were noted as early as mid January and until 21 April in 2009. Dunn's Lark is also known in the Zemmour, Mauritania (de Naurois 1974).

African Rock Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula* RB, BM (-/-, 9/83+, 3/5)

2007 (07/24) **Sarhro**, gorges north of Agdz, two, 30 March, photo (B. Maire & P. Dupuis)

2007 (07/32) **Saharan Atlas**, near Bouarfa, 20 May, photo (V. Liéron)

2008 (08/28) **Oued Ad Deheb**, El Argoub, two, 27 February (P. Bergier & M. Thévenot)

The breeding distribution, ecological requirements and movements of African Rock Martin remain poorly known in Morocco (Bergier 2007).

Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi* WV (-/-, 7/24, 1/9)

2008 (08/41) **Souss**, Massa, nine, 31 October, photo (H. Dufourny *et al.*)

Between 1995 and 2008, H. Dufourny made five records of Richard's Pipit at Massa, all in cultivation at Sidi Wassaï, upstream of the estuary.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

2007 (07/43) **Souss**, Agadir, 8–9 November, photo (T. Berger & G. Holm)

First Moroccan and African record. The subspecies *yunnanensis* winters in southern Asia and is a rare vagrant to Western Europe. It breeds from north Russia (east of the Urals) to northern Asia, and then to Mongolia, Manchuria (China), Tibet and north-east India in the south. European records are mostly in autumn, from late September to November, concentrated in central Europe (Germany, Poland, Denmark), Fennoscandia and the British Isles. By 2005, there were only 12 French records (2 October–10 November: Dubois *et al.* 2008), three in Spain, including one in Andalucia (10 October–25 December: de Juana 2006) and one in Portugal (Algarve, 16 November: *Ardeola* 43: 115).

Dunnock *Prunella modularis* WV (-/-, 2/3, 1/1)

2008 (08/09) **Zaers**, Rabat, adult, 2 January, photo (I. Cherkaoui)

Typical date and locality for this rare winter visitor; this is only the third record analysed by the MRBC. I. Cherkaoui also saw one on 24 December 2006 in the Mamora forest near Kenitra.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* PM, OW?, OB? (21/25, 5/5+)

2006 (06/53) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla–Aousserd road, km 60, 1–2, 29 October (G. van Vlierden)

2006 (06/56) **Lower Draa**, 32 km south-west of Goulimine, 16 December, photo (S. Piner *et al.*)

2007 (07/14) **Tafilalt**, Derkaoua, 18 February, photo (M. Altieri, A. Vezzani *et al.*)

2009 (09/06) **Western Anti-Atlas**, Tafraoute, 15 February (S. Bot & J. Ouwehand)

2009 (09/46) **Tafilalt**, Merzouga, adult male, 20 March, photo (F. Ducry & P. Zeller)

First records in autumn. Do they concern passage migrants or winter visitors? It is also worth mentioning that two records are from the Atlantic Sahara, as this wheatear is generally considered an eastern migrant.

Several other data from 2007–09 have not been submitted to the MRBC: three on the Dakhla–Aousserd road (16 January 2007, L. G. R. Evans); a female at Dayet Srij, Merzouga (20 February 2007, J. Fagefors *et al.*); two males at Tagdilt (22 February 2007, J. Fagefors *et al.*); one at Café Yasmina, Merzouga (16–17 March 2007, R. Thorneycroft, H. Hveding *et al.*); one south of Goulimine, marker 'Tantan 100' (20 March 2007, L. G. R. Evans); one at Derkaoua, Merzouga (28 April 2007, N. Redman / Birdquest); ten in the sandy plains south of Goulimine (20 February 2008, T. Pettersson *et al. in* Bergier & Thévenot 2008); one south of Zagora (17 March 2008, P. Jones); one at Merzouga (19 March 2008, P. Jones); and one at Café Yasmina, Merzouga (18 March 2009, S. Lister & P. Jones).

L. G. R. Evans reported a pair feeding fledged young 22 km south of Goulimine on 6 May 2009. If confirmed, this would be the first breeding record for Morocco.

Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

2008 (08/49) **Tafilalt**, Café Yasmina, Merzouga, first-winter male, 17 December, photo (R. Messemaker *et al.*)

First record for Morocco and Africa. This bird was tame and feeding on bread crumbs and seeds on the terrace of the café, amongst House Sparrows

Passer domesticus. The record was fully detailed by Messemaker (2009).

Cricket Warbler *Spiloptila clamans* RB? (0/0, 0/0, 2/5)

2009 (09/29) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla–Aousserd road, three, 15 January, photo (J. H. Hansen)
2009 (09/42) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla–Aousserd road, two singing, 21 April, photo (P. Vantieghem *et al.*)

First records analysed by the MRBC. The previous ones were described in Thévenot & Bergier (2008b).

Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* PM (-/-, 2/2, 1/4)

2009 (09/11) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos marshes, two mist-netted and photographed, 30 March 2008 (one) and 1 April 2008 (one). Two sightings, 31 March 2008 (one) and 2 April 2008 (one) (A. Onrubia *et al. fide* I. Cherkaoui; Ramírez 2009)

This is only the third record analysed by the MRBC. Mist-netting is of tremendous importance to detect this unobstrusive and globally threatened species. The present records resulted from two mist-netting campaigns in the Lower Loukkos marshes by a Spanish team in 2008–09 indicating that the site is probably an important stopover for the species (Onrubia *et al.* 2009b, Ramírez 2009).

Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* MB (-/-, 4/7+, 7/17+)

2006 (06/73) **Tafilalt**, Rissani, 4 April, tape-recorded (A. B. van den Berg)
2008 (08/15a) **Tafilalt**, Rissani, two, 26–27 March, photo (A. B. van den Berg)
2008 (08/15b) **Tafilalt**, Rissani, two, 12 April, photo (A. B. van den Berg)
2008 (08/18) **Tafilalt**, Derkaoua, 3–4, 11 April, photo (A. B. van den Berg)
2009 (09/20) **Dadès-Draa**, Ouarzazate, two, 1 and 12 April, photo (A. B. van den Berg *et al.*)
2009 (09/24) **Tafilalt**, Touroug, 5+, 31 March and 9 April, tape-recorded (A. B. van den Berg *et al.*)
2009 (09/48) **Tafilalt**, Aoufous, two singing males, 28 April (P. Adriaens *et al.*)

All documented records are from the south-east desert areas of Morocco: Saharan Atlas and South-Eastern Sahara (Mengoub–Figuig), Tafilalt (Rissani–Merzouga) and Dadès-Draa (near Ouarzazate). The western limit of this warbler's range requires precise elucidation. Records 08/15a and 08/15b were within 50–100 m of one another and the birds were using old tamarisks within a palmerie. A photo was published in *Dutch Birding* 30: 200. The tape-recordings are consistent with those presented on CD2:60 of Constantine & The Sound Approach (2006).

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* AV/PM? (13/33+, 2/2, 1/1)

2005 (05/53) **Tangier Peninsula**, Mdiq, mist-netted, 25 May, photo (M. Amezian & I. R. Thompson)

Sixteenth record for Morocco, all of them from spring migration (April–May) and fairly easterly (nine east of 05°W). This record was detailed by Amezian *et al.* (2006).

Moltoni's Warbler *Sylvia* (*cantillans*) *moltonii* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

2008 (08/19) **Tafilalt**, Merzouga, 26 March, second-year male, photo (A. B. van den Berg)

First Moroccan record. A photo of this bird was published in *Dutch Birding* 30: 194. Gargallo (1994) then Shirihai *et al.* (2001) were first to propose to split this taxon from other taxa in the *Sylvia cantillans* complex. The recent study by Brambilla *et al.* (2008), based on distribution pattern, voice and genetics, confirms that this

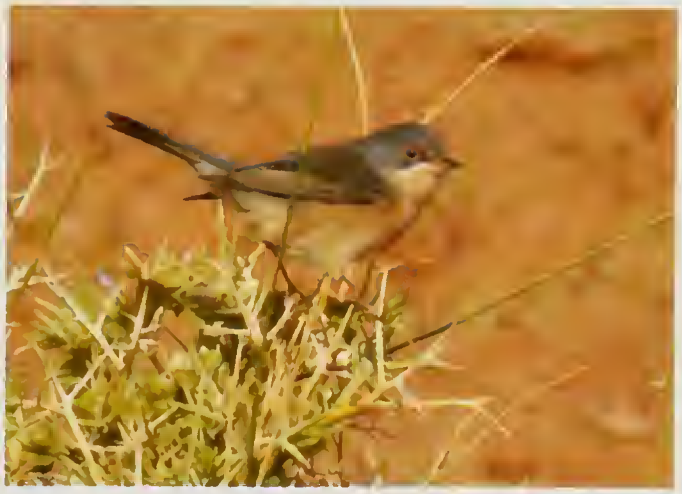


Figure 7. Second-year male Moltoni's Warbler *Sylvia* (*cantillans*) *moltonii*, Merzouga, 26 March 2008 (A.B. van den Berg). The first record for Morocco.

Fauvette de Moltoni *Sylvia* (*cantillans*) *moltonii*, mâle de deuxième année, Merzouga, 26 mars 2008 (A.B. van den Berg). La première donnée pour le Maroc.

taxon merits the rank of species: *S. moltonii* (= *S. subalpina*: Baccetti *et al.* 2007). Moltoni's Warbler occurs on Sardinia, Corsica, the Balearics and parts of the Italian Peninsula.

Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus* PM, BM, OW (-/-, 4/5, 8/16+)

2006 (06/34) **Western High Atlas**, Oukaïmeden, 5+, 12 October, photo (A. B. van den Berg)

2007 (07/60) **Tangier Peninsula**, Mdiq, mist-netted, 23 March (M. Amezian & I. R. Thompson)

2007 (07/66) **Tangier Peninsula**, Mdiq, mist-netted, 25 March (M. Amezian & I. R. Thompson)

2008 (08/33) **Jbala**, Moulay Abdeslam shrine, singing male, 29 June (J. Franchimont & M. Fareh)

2008 (08/54) **Western High Atlas**, Oukaïmeden, 6 September, photo (B. Maire)

2009 (09/25) **Tafilalt**, Merzouga, 5+, 31 March, tape-recorded (A. B. van den Berg *et al.*)

2009 (09/55) **Jbala**, Moulay Abdeslam shrine, singing male, 20–21 June, photo (B. Maire, J. Franchimont & M. Fareh)

2009 (09/56) **Jbala**, Moulay Abdeslam shrine, singing male, 20 June (B. Maire, J. Franchimont & M. Fareh)

The first bird at Oukaïmeden was identified by its diagnostic call, which was repeated frequently. Up to four similar birds, brightly coloured almost like Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus* with whitish fringes to the flight feathers but blackish legs, were also present.

The birds near the Moulay Abdeslam shrine in 2008–09 probably belong to the small Moroccan breeding population. They were in an old cork-oak forest with dense undergrowth of *Arbutus unedo*, *Erica cinerea*, *Cistus* spp., *Pteridium aquilinum* and *Rubus* sp., near a small stream. Iberian Chiffchaff is far from common in this area.

During migration Iberian Chiffchaff has been reported in spring from late February to mid April and in autumn from September to mid October (Thévenot *et al.* 2003). Record 08/54 is the earliest autumn record outside the breeding range.

Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius m. meridionalis* OW / WV ? (0/0, 0/0, 3/3)

2005 (05/50) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Melilla, adult, 10 January, photo (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)

2006 (06/55a and 06/58) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Sebkha Bou-Areg, adult, 2–5 November, photo (V. Schollaert, D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramírez Espinar)

2006 (06/55b) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Cap des Trois Fourches, adult, 3 November (V. Schollaert)

This subspecies had not previously been documented in Morocco. Thévenot *et al.* (2003) stated: 'Birds of the European race (*L. m. meridionalis*?) probably occur in winter as there is a regular, though small, southward passage from Spain across the Straits [*sic*] from Aug to Oct'. D. Jerez Abad and R. Ramírez Espinar explain: 'This taxon occurs sometimes in Eastern Morocco, especially in autumn and winter'. The regularity of winter records and possible occurrence elsewhere in the country require study.

Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

2007 (07/10) **Chiadma**, Essaouira, second-year male, 23 February, photo (P. Ferreira *et al.*)

First record for Morocco. This bird was found among a small flock of Spotless Starlings *Sturnus unicolor*; it then flew onto a wall and started to sing.

Up to 2003, there were 14 records in Portugal and 15 in Spain, including two on the Canaries (de Juana 2006). In North Africa, there are only old records in Algeria (19th century: Heim de Balsac & Mayaud 1962), in Tunisia (1903: Isenmann *et al.* 2005), and in Libya (1937 and 1969: Bundy 1976).

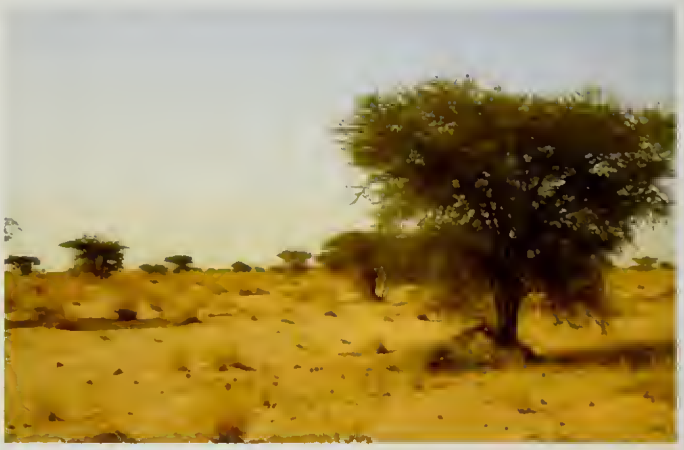


Figure 8. The Aousserd road. This habitat is excellent for species such as Black-crowned Sparrow Lark *Eremopterix nigriceps*, Dunn's Lark *Eremalauda dunni* and Cricket Warbler *Spiloptila clamans* (P. Bergier)

La route d'Aousserd. Cet habitat a attiré des espèces telles que la Moinelette à front blanc *Eremopterix nigriceps*, l'Alouette de Dunn *Eremalauda dunni* et la Prinia à front écailleux *Spiloptila clamans* (P. Bergier)

Sudan Golden Sparrow *Passer luteus* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/7)

2009 (09/41) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Awserd, 21 April, two males and five females / juveniles, photo (P. Vantieghem *et al.*)

First record of Sudan Golden Sparrow. In Mauritania, this Sahelian species has colonised the Cap Blanc Peninsula since 1978 and is known to wander as far as the border with Morocco (Mahé 1985).

Eurasian Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* AV (4/5, 1/3+, 1/3)

2007 (07/02) **Western High Atlas**, near Arhbalou, one male and two females, 6 January (D. Bryant)

First record since 1987, and the southernmost to date. Eurasian Bullfinch is definitely very rare in Morocco.

Records not accepted

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* 2008 (08/10) Western Middle Atlas, Zerrouka, two males, 18 January, photo. **Ruddy Duck** *Oxyura jamaicensis* 2007 (07/38) Rharb, Sidi Bou-Rhaba, adult female, 23 September, photo. **Green-backed (Striated) Heron** *Butorides striata* 2007 (07/30) Eastern Anti-Atlas, 26 km south of Tazenakht, adult, 18 April. 2008 (08/36) Central Anti-Atlas, Tata, 30 March. **Western Reef Heron** *Egretta gularis* 2006 (06/68) Haha, Oued Igzoulane, Tamri, adult, 9 May. **Lammergeier** *Gypaetus barbatus* 2007 (07/70) Western High Atlas, Oukaïmeden, juvenile, 4 March. **Tawny Eagle** *Aquila rapax* 2009 (09/13) Dadès-Draa, Boumalne du Dadès, second-year, 23–24 March. **Sooty Falcon** *Falco concolor* 2007 (07/28) Western Middle Atlas, Dayet Afenourir, 1 July. **Barbary Falcon** *F. pelegrinoides* 2005 (05/49) Tafilalt, Errachidia, 11 March, photo. (05/52) Haha, Vallée du Paradis, pair, 23 November. 2006 (06/69) Western Anti-Atlas, north of Sidi Ifni, two pairs, 7–8 May. 2007. (07/23) Souss, Oulad Berehil, male and female, 1 January. 2008 (08/22) Haha, 10 km north of Tamri, 29 March, photo. **Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana* 2006 (06/54) Lower Draa, Oued Assaka, adult, 22 October. **Slender-billed Curlew** *Numenius tenuirostris* 2006 (06/72) Chiadma, Essaouira, 26 February. **Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis* 2009 (09/03) Tarfaya, Khnifiss, 12, 4 January. (09/32) Tarfaya, Tantan Plage, second-winter, 9 January. **African Collared Dove** *Streptopelia roseogrisea* 2006 (06/70) Oued Ad-Deheb, Bir Gandouz, adult, 24 October. **Plain Swift** *Apus unicolor* 1997 (97/30) Tarfaya, Tantan, 27 January, photo. 2006 (06/57) Souss, Hôtel Le Tivoli, Agadir, one, 9 November, and two, 10 November. **African Rock Martin** *Ptyonoprogne fuligula* 2006 (06/43) South-Eastern Sahara, kasbah Takoumit, Bouanane, 3 December. 2009 (09/35) Dadès-Draa, Tizi-n-Tinififft, 22 March. **Richard's Pipit** *Anthus richardi* 2007 (07/57) Rharb, Merja Zerga, two, 13 March. **African Thrush** *Turdus pelios* 2008 (08/53) Western High Atlas, Ourika, 4 April. **Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina* 2007 (07/34) Tafilalt, Derkaoua dunes, Rissani, adult, 6 April, video. **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella certhiola* 2007 (07/52) Doukkala, Jorf Lasfar, 16 September. **Southern Grey Shrike** *Lanius m. meridionalis* 2006 (06/67) Souss, Taroudant, 31 March, photo. **Hooded Crow** *Corvus (c.) cornix* 2005 (05/54) Tangier Peninsula, Mdiq, 18 March. **Citril Finch** *Serinus citrinella* 2007 (07/55) Haha, Aït Chelh, Tamkhart Valley, 6 June. 2008 (08/34) Haha, Tifrit, Tamkhart Valley, adult female, 20 June.

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A waterbird survey on the coast of Quirimbas National Park, northern Mozambique

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Un inventaire des oiseaux d'eau sur la côte du Parc National de Quirimbas, Mozambique du nord. Un inventaire des oiseaux d'eau a été réalisé en décembre 2009 sur neuf îles maritimes du Parc National de Quirimbas, Mozambique. Au total, 14.982 oiseaux de 34 espèces ont été comptés, parmi lesquels 82% étaient des migrateurs paléarctiques. Pour six espèces (Drome ardéole *Dromas ardeola*, Pluvier à front blanc *Charadrius marginatus*, Pluvier de Mongolie *C. mongolus*, Pluvier de Leschenault *C. leschenaultii*, Pluvier argenté *Pluvialis squatarola*, Sterne voyageuse *Sterna bengalensis*) le nombre dépassait le seuil de 1% du critère 6 de la Convention de Ramsar ; le parc se qualifie ainsi comme zone humide d'importance internationale. Deux tiers des oiseaux ont été observés sur quatre grands reposoirs de marée haute loin de toute activité humaine, soulignant l'importance de contrôler les dérangements humains près de ces sites, qui couvrent moins de 4% de la zone inventoriée.

Summary. A waterbird survey was carried out in December 2009 on nine marine islands in Quirimbas National Park, Mozambique. We counted 14,982 individuals of 34 species. Eighty-two per cent of the birds were Palearctic migrants. For six species (Crab-plover *Dromas ardeola*, White-fronted Plover *Charadrius marginatus*, Lesser Sand Plover *C. mongolus*, Greater Sand Plover *C. leschenaultii*, Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*) numbers exceeded the 1% Ramsar criterion; the park thus qualifies as a wetland of international importance. Two-thirds of the birds were observed in four large high-tide roosts far from human disturbance, highlighting the importance of controlling such activities close to these sites that cover less than 4% of the surveyed area.

Waterbirds are among the most threatened vertebrates, as they are entirely dependent on wetlands, which have been very strongly affected by human activities (Stroud *et al.* 2006). Recent estimates suggest that 45% of waterbird populations are decreasing or already extinct, with several species exhibiting precipitous declines and severely threatened with extinction (Davidson & Stroud 2006, Wetlands International 2006).

Among the causes linked to declines in waterbird numbers, habitat destruction is probably the most important (Stroud *et al.* 2006, Kirby *et al.* 2008). Consequently, conservation should focus on identifying and protecting key habitats and sites where the largest waterbird congregations occur. Various international agreements exist for the protection of wetlands as habitats for waterbirds. Among these, the Ramsar Convention (Kabii 1997, Ramsar Convention Secretariat 2006) calls for the protection of sites whose importance is evaluated through criteria such as the regular presence of at least 20,000 individuals or of 1% or more of the population of a species or subspecies of waterbird. In Africa, few sites have been evaluated against the Ramsar criteria and many important waterbird areas probably remain unknown.

One of the most important migration routes, the 'West Asia/East Africa flyway', runs along the east coast of Africa and is used by more than 20 million Palearctic shorebirds (Davidson & Stroud 2006). Numerous other waterbirds, including intra-African migrants and residents, occur along Africa's eastern coast, which clearly has a pivotal role in the conservation of waterbird populations. Unfortunately, long stretches are almost unsurveyed and their role as waterbird sites is poorly known. In particular, the coast of northern Mozambique features as a blank spot in the distribution maps of migratory waterbirds (Scott & Rose 1996, Delany *et al.* 2009). As Mozambique is located near the end of the West Asia/East Africa flyway, it probably plays a key role as a staging site or final destination for Palearctic waterbirds during their seasonal migrations.

Quirimbas National Park comprises a vast ecosystem of wetlands on the coast of northern Mozambique. Apart from historical data from the Vincent expedition (Vincent 1933) and some recent preliminary work (Diagana & Dodman

2007, Wilson 2008), no information on the waterbirds of this large region is available. To help close this gap, we undertook a preliminary survey of the marine coast of Quirimbas National Park. The aims of our survey were (1) to assess species diversity and the numbers of waterbirds that use the park as a wintering area, and (2) to locate the most important roost sites.

Study area

Quirimbas National Park (Parque Nacional das Quirimbas (PNQ), 40°03'E 12°37'S) has an area of 7,506 km^2, which include an extensive inland ecosystem and 235.5 km of sea coast, of which 86.1 km (37%) comprises islands. The marine part of PNQ includes several coralline islands that form part of the Quirimbas archipelago. These islands range in size from 15 ha (Ilha das Rolas) to 30 km^2 (Ilha Matemo, Fig. 1). While most of the terrestrial coast is occupied by extensive mangrove forests (where *Rhizophora mucronata* is the dominant species), the islands usually possess rocky or sandy shores and a low, bush and thicket vegetation in the interior (with *Euclea* spp., *Salvadora persica*, *Commiphora* spp.). A tidal range of 3–4 m causes extensive coralline reefs to emerge every day at low tide. These reefs are mostly rocky and narrow (<1 km) around the smaller islands, but are broader (1–2 km) with large expanses of mud and sand around the larger ones, providing potential foraging areas for waterbirds.

Human population is quite dense along the coast of PNQ. Most islands have small fishing villages, but some of the smallest (Ilha das Rolas, Mogundula, Quisiva and Sencar) are uninhabited. The larger islands (Matemo, Ibo, Quirimbas) sustain agriculture and a relatively large human population (2,000–5,000 individuals). Fishing is intensive but practiced using traditional, low-impact techniques.

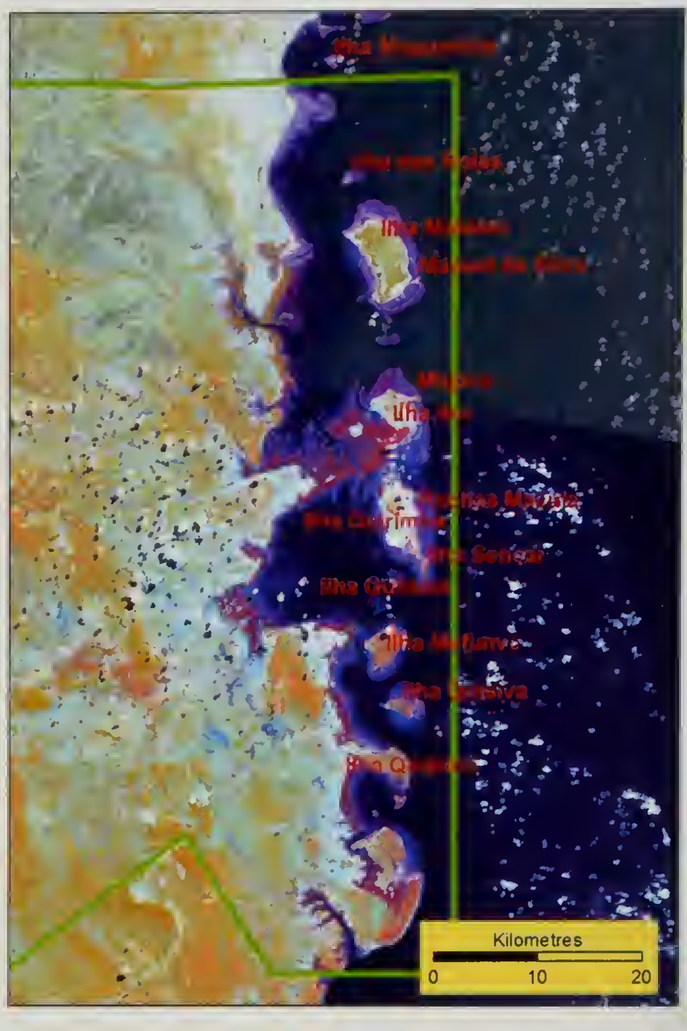

Figure 1. Map of the survey area (mosaic of two Landas ETM+ images taken in December 1999 and May 2002). The green line marks the borders of Quirimbas National Park. In this infra-red satellite image, mangrove forests are dark red, sandy and muddy shores are white or pale turquoise, coral reef (emerging at low tide) ranges from azure to purple, while coastal bush/thicket is pale orange.

Carte de la zone inventoriée (combinaison de deux images Landas ETM+ de décembre 1999 et mai 2002). La ligne verte marque les limites du Parc National de Quirimbas. Sur cette image satellitaire infra-rouge, les forêts de mangrove sont en rouge foncé, les côtes sablonneuses ou boueuses en blanc ou turquoise pâle, les récifs de corail (qui émergent à marée basse) varient d'azure à pourpre, et les fourrés côtiers sont en orange pâle.

Methods

The survey was conducted on 8–17 December 2009 and focused on the area between Ilha Mogundula (*c*.2 km outside the northern boundary of PNQ, but protected by a private owner) and Ilha Quisiva (Fig. 1). We concentrated on the islands, because the mangrove forests on the terrestrial coast are inaccessible on foot. In total, we surveyed 53.7 km of coast on nine islands, representing 23% of the coastal length of PNQ (and 63% of the islands, Table 1).

Preliminary observations revealed that, at low tide, waterbirds dispersed at low densities over vast stretches of emerging coral reef, making accurate counts impossible as most birds escaped detection. We therefore undertook counts at high tide and paid particular attention to locating large roosts. All counts were made by both authors,

Table 1. Sectors of the marine coast of Quirimbas National Park, Mozambique, visited during the survey.

Tableau 1. Les secteurs de la côte maritime du Parc National de Quirimbas, Mozambique, visités pendant l'inventaire.

Name of sector	Survey dates	Length of sector (km)	Length surveyed (km)	Percentage surveyed
Terrestrial coast	–	149.4	0	0.0%
Ilha das Rolas	09/12/2009	2.2	2.2	100.0%
Ilha Mogundula	09/12/2009	2.1	2.1	100.0%
Ilha Matemo	10–13/12/2009	21.9	14.4	65.8%
Ilha Ibo	12–13/09/2009	14.9	9.7	65.1%
Ilha Quirimba	14/12/2009	15.8	4.2	26.6%
Ilha Sencar	15/12/2009	4	2.5	62.5%
Ilha Quilalea	15/12/2009	2.7	2.7	100.0%
Ilha Mefunvo	16/12/2009	11.8	9.5	80.5%
Ilha Quisiva	17/12/2009	7.6	6.4	84.2%
Ilha Quipaco	--	3.1	0	0.0%
Total		235.5	53.7	22.8%

who worked together and identified birds using 8× binoculars and 25–50× spotting scopes.

Results

During the survey, 14,982 waterbirds of 34 species were observed; 82% of these were Palearctic migrants (Table 2). Five species (Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*, Crab-plover *Dromas ardeola*, Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*, Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* and Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*) accounted for 66% (9,881 individuals) of the total. For seven species (marked * in Table 2), numbers exceeded the 1% thresholds of the Ramsar criterion.

The distribution of birds in the study area was uneven, as 66% of individuals were observed at four large roosts (Table 3) that covered a total of *c*.2.5 km (<4% of the length of coast surveyed). Abundance within roosts was also unevenly distributed across species. Whilst for some species the large majority of birds was observed in the four roosts (e.g., Crab-plover, Lesser Sand Plover, Grey Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*), for others most individuals were observed outside the roosts (e.g. White-fronted Plover *Charadrius marginatus*, Whimbrel, Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*, Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*; Table 3).

Discussion

PNQ was already known to host internationally important numbers of White-fronted Plovers (Diagana & Dodman 2007), but no detailed counts were available for other species. Our survey found *c*.15,000 waterbirds—a figure that we believe to be a substantial under-estimate of the real number. There are two main sources of under-estimation in our counts: incomplete coverage of the coast and inaccurate counts due to birds escaping detection. We now examine these sources of bias in more detail.

No counts were made on PNQ's terrestrial coast, which represents >60% of the park's coastline (Table 1). Substantial numbers of birds were thus probably missed. Moreover, this coast is largely covered in dense mangrove forest, a habitat preferentially used by some bird species for roosting. It is therefore probable that our results were particularly inaccurate for these species. Preliminary observations made during this survey, as well as previously published data (Borghesio *et al.* 2009) suggest that, among Charadriiformes, substantial numbers of Whimbrel, Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, and Terek *Xenus cinereus* and Common Sandpipers use mangroves as high-tide roosts, as do other waterbirds, such as Great Egret *Egretta alba*, Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis* and Hadada Ibis *Bostrychia hagedash*. The wintering populations of these species at PNQ is probably >50% greater than suggested by our counts.

Our survey focused on the islands. In general, small islands off the African coast are important for waterbirds, as they are better protected from large mammalian predators and human disturbance. We covered 53.7 km of insular coast, which represents 62% of the coastline of the islands within PNQ. Assuming that bird abundance was constant, we can extrapolate that the total number of waterbirds on the islands might be up to 24,000 individuals.

Under-estimation is also likely because many birds, especially of the smallest species (e.g. Lesser Sand Plover, Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*, Little Stint *Calidris minuta*, Curlew Sandpiper), tended to hide among coral rocks and may therefore escape detection.

Even though our total counts numbered <20,000 individuals, it is probable that the marine part of PNQ hosts many more waterbirds

Table 2. List of species and number of individuals observed. Species marked with asterisks are those whose censused population exceeds the 1% threshold of Ramsar criterion 6 (Ramsar Convention Secretariat 2006); 1% thresholds taken from Wetlands International (2006).

Tableau 2. Liste des espèces et nombre d'individus observés. Les espèces marquées d'un astérisque sont celles dont la population inventoriée dépasse le seuil de 1% du critère 6 de la Convention de Ramsar (Ramsar Convention Secretariat 2006) ; les seuils de 1% sont repris de Wetlands International (2006).

Species	Ibo	Rolas	Mogundula	Quilalea	Sencar	Matemo	Mefunvo	Quirimba	Quisiva	Total
ARDEIDAE										
Striated Heron *Butorides striata*	0	1	1	0	2	1	2	1	6	14
*Dimorphic Egret *Egretta dimorpha*	144	6	16	6	8	147	77	181	38	623
Great Egret *Egretta alba*	29	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	29
Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath*	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
CICONIIDAE										
Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis*	172	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	183
Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus*	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	3
THRESKIORNITIDAE										
Hadada Ibis *Bostrychia hagedash*	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*	26	0	8	0	0	11	0	85	0	130
PHOENICOPTERIDAE										
Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	6
ACCIPITRIDAE										
Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	3
African Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer*	1	1	0	2	0	0	2	1	1	8
DROMADIDAE										
*Crab-plover *Dromas ardeola*	0	0	180	0	1,250	0	2	1	0	1,433
BURHINIDAE										
Water Thick-knee *Burhinus vermiculatus*	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
CHARADRIDAE										
Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*	178	18	26	24	35	205	86	195	55	809
*White-fronted Plover *Charadrius marginatus*	155	0	0	5	14	29	42	28	8	277
*Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*	523	5	120	8	40	235	38	1,112	25	2,094
*Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*	99	2	50	0	6	72	25	184	12	446
Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
*Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*	321	4	2	4	0	304	73	569	12	1,284
SCOLOPACIDAE										
Sanderling *Calidris alba*	113	0	1	0	3	175	24	148	0	456
Little Stint *Calidris minuta*	41	0	0	0	0	68	0	149	0	258
Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*	1,167	0	2	0	5	501	50	335	0	2,045
Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*	25	0	0	0	0	4	0	280	0	309
Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*	685	1	38	15	75	407	87	61	31	1,394
Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*	265	0	0	6	18	93	45	28	0	455
Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*	123	0	69	0	0	99	0	125	0	416
Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*	14	4	3	0	5	8	39	0	11	84
Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*	87	40	40	21	45	86	24	46	45	434
STERNIDAE										
Greater Crested Tern *Sterna bergii*	0	0	3	0	0	27	0	3	0	33
*Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*	432	300	180	0	30	574	31	84	0	1,631
Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	0	23
Little/Saunders's Tern *S. albifrons/S. saundersii*	0	0	0	0	0	13	0	11	0	24
Total	**4,606**	**382**	**741**	**91**	**1,536**	**3,069**	**661**	**3,652**	**244**	**14,982**

Table 3. Waterbirds observed at the four major roost sites.

Tableau 3. Oiseaux d'eau observés sur les quatre reposoirs les plus importants.

Species	Roost name				
	Mujaca, Ilha Ibo	**Manuel da Silva, Ilha Matemo**	**Macula rocks, Ilha Quirimba**	**Ilha Sencar**	**% in roosts**
Striated Heron *Butorides striata*	0	0	1	2	21%
egrets *Egretta* spp.	24	107	181	8	51%
Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath*	2	0	0	0	67%
Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis*	49	0	0	0	27%
Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*	7	8	85	0	77%
African Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer*	1	0	1	0	25%
Crab-plover *Dromas ardeola*	0	0	1	1,250	87%
Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*	75	116	182	35	49%
White-fronted Plover *Charadrius marginatus*	25	29	24	14	33%
Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*	440	94	1,100	40	80%
Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*	55	36	180	6	62%
Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*	0	0	1	0	100%
Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*	299	242	564	0	86%
Sanderling *Calidris alba*	97	135	140	3	82%
Little Stint *Calidris minuta*	23	41	149	0	83%
Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*	901	358	320	5	77%
Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*	25	4	280	0	100%
Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*	247	148	55	75	37%
Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*	0	0	1	0	100%
Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*	150	66	28	18	58%
Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*	109	92	125	0	78%
Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*	0	0	0	5	6%
Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*	46	64	46	45	46%
Greater Crested Tern *Sterna bergii*	0	26	3	0	88%
Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*	432	124	84	30	41%
Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*	0	0	23	0	100%
Little/Saunders's Tern *S. albifrons / S. saundersii*	0	13	11	0	100%
Total	**3,007**	**1,703**	**3,585**	**1,536**	**66%**

than this during the boreal winter. Therefore, we provide initial evidence that PNQ is an internationally important waterbird area, as it fulfils the requirement of criterion 5 (>20,000 waterbirds regularly present in the area) of the Ramsar Convention (Ramsar Convention Secretariat 2006).

Our survey was conducted in December, when Palearctic migrants have usually reached their wintering grounds, and indeed no migratory movements were observed. Although preliminary observations suggest that large numbers of migrants use the Quirimbas archipelago as a stopover site in October (Wilson 2008), more research is needed to assess the importance of PNQ in September–November for waterbirds moving further south.

The largest numbers of birds were located on or close to the three largest islands of the archipelago (Matemo, Ibo and Quirimba). These possess vast expanses of sandy and muddy reefs at low tide (Fig. 1), providing suitable foraging areas for waterbirds. The small islands (Quilalea, Quisiva, Mefunvo) have much narrower reefs and therefore tend to support smaller numbers of birds, with the exception of Sencar, where a large roost (mostly of Crab-plovers) was found. As Sencar is close to Quirimba (the two islands are connected at low tide), we can hypothesise that birds roosting on Sencar forage on the coral reefs around Quirimba.

Birds were largely concentrated at four high-tide roosts, which totalled about two-thirds of the total number of birds counted. One of these roosts was sited on a small island with no human population (Sencar), two were on tiny rocks a few hundred metres from a large island (Manuel da Silva, close to Matemo and Macula rocks, near Quirimba). The fourth roost was on a small rocky peninsula (Mujaca) in an uninhabited sector of Ibo. This suggests that disturbance (from humans or other terrestrial predators) is an important factor determining the distribution of roosting sites. It is therefore important that these four sites be maintained free of disturbance, e.g. by regulating settlements and human activities in the area.

Of the 34 species observed, six qualified for Ramsar criterion 6 (wetlands supporting 1% of the individuals in a population of a species or subspecies of waterbird). However, difficulties in the identification of some species might have compromised the results of our counts. *Charadrius mongolus* and *C. leschenaultii* pose an identification problem, even though the race *C. leschenaultii columbinus*, which is almost indistinguishable from *C. mongolus*, is not found in Mozambique, where only *C. l. leschenaultii* seems to occur (Hirschfeld *et al.* 2000, Delany *et al.* 2009). We suspect that some *C. leschenaultii*, especially among individuals seen at longer distances, might have been incorrectly identified as *C. mongolus*, as the distinction of the two species relies on subtle details of bill and head morphology (Hirschfeld *et al.* 2000). If true, then numbers of *C. leschenaltii* in Table 2 would be biased low, while counts of *C. mongolus* would be biased high. This would stress the importance of PNQ as an internationally important site for *C. leschenaultii* (whose 1% level is 380 individuals), without denying the importance of the area for *C. mongolus* which, according to our counts, vastly surpassed the 1% threshold of 1,250 individuals proposed for this species by Wetlands International (2006).

Egrets represent another identification problem. Based on the field identification characters provided by Zimmerman *et al.* (1996), we consider that *E. garzetta* and *E. gularis* were very rare or even absent in the Quirimbas during our survey and that *E. dimorpha* was by far the most numerous of the three species in the study area. This is also corroborated by the fact that the majority (55% of 480 adults) of individuals were of the black morph, which is more abundant than the white morph in *E. dimorpha* (Zimmerman *et al.* 1996). However, for individuals seen at long distances, or whose legs were stained with mud, we cannot eliminate the possibility of confusion with *E. garzetta* and *E. gularis*, which have also been observed in the area (M. Wilson pers. comm). For this reason, in Table 2, we list all small egrets as *E. dimorpha / garzetta / gularis* and suggest that more research is needed to confirm the specific identification of these egrets on the northern Mozambique coast. Even if small numbers of *E. garzetta* or *E. gularis* were misidentified as *E. dimorpha*, it still seems likely that PNQ is an internationally important site also for *E. dimorpha*, as the 1% level for this species (130 individuals: Wetlands International 2006) is far surpassed by our counts of more than 600 individuals. *E. dimorpha* might therefore be another species with internationally important numbers in the study area.

Conclusion

Our survey contributed to improving the knowledge of an area that has always figured as a largely blank spot on the distribution maps of African birds. We provide preliminary data that PNQ is an internationally important site for both Palearctic and African waterbirds. Further research is required to confirm the regular presence of important numbers of waterbirds in the area, as well as for elucidating the importance of PNQ as a stopover site for migrants heading further south in September–November or returning north in February–April.

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Using satellite imagery for African bird conservation

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L'utilisation de l'imagerie satellitaire pour la conservation des oiseaux en Afrique. L'imagerie satellitaire est utilisée de plus en plus par la science de la conservation des oiseaux. Les images peuvent couvrir de vastes zones de façon de plus en plus détaillée et fréquente, ce qui en fait un outil formidable, et une alternative aux inventaires coûteux sur le terrain. Elles sont également disponibles pour des régions ou pays politiquement instables, éloignés ou inaccessibles, ce qui les rend particulièrement utiles pour des zones impossibles à inventorier sur le terrain. En plus de l'identification de sites d'importance pour la conservation auparavant inconnus, ces données ont été utilisées pour comprendre la distribution de certaines espèces et d'en dresser la carte, et pour découvrir les changements dans la couverture végétale (ce qui peut être utilisé comme une indication pour la perte d'habitat) pratiquement en temps réel. Bien que l'imagerie satellitaire ne constitue pas une panacée, et ne remplacera jamais les données obtenues sur le terrain, le ciblage approprié de la technologie pourrait fournir une contribution importante à la conservation des oiseaux en Afrique.

Summary. Satellite images are increasingly used in avian conservation science. Images can cover extensive areas in increasing detail at increasing frequencies, making them a great tool, and an alternative to expensive field surveys. They are also available from regions or countries that may be politically unstable, remote or inaccessible, making them especially relevant for areas that cannot be covered by field surveys. In addition to identifying previously unknown sites of potential conservation importance, these data have been used to understand and map species distributions, and track changes in land cover (which can be used as an indication of habitat loss) in near real time. While satellite images are not a panacea, and will never replace the need for field data, appropriate targeting of the technology could make a substantial contribution to avian conservation in Africa.

Many will be familiar with satellite images and aerial photographs of the Earth through the advent of websites such as Google Earth (http://earth.google.com). Visual examination of these images has already resulted in the discovery of sites of potential conservation importance and is being used to target field surveys at interesting areas (e.g. Dowsett-Lemaire 2010). Other sites of conservation importance may come to light through the simple process of examining these images for areas of potentially interesting habitats in otherwise degraded landscapes. However, this is just one of many ways that the information collected by satellites can be used to support bird conservation in Africa, and indeed globally. Here, we outline some of the means by which satellite imagery can help conservationists and researchers, and describe some initiatives that might pave the way for a new generation of bird monitoring and research in Africa.

Satellite images

Satellite images are taken by space-borne sensors that measure at-sensor variation in radiation reflected or emitted from the Earth's surface; essentially, they take photographs from space, though unlike ordinary cameras, they also collect information from wavelengths above and below those visible to the human eye. The radiation they capture can be that which is reflected from the Earth's surface from natural sources (passive sensors), such as sunlight, or that reflected from an artificial radar source mounted on the satellite itself (active sensors). The characteristics of the surface of the Earth cause variation in the reflectance measured by the sensors. For example, forest absorbs different wavelengths of light from grassland, so there are differences in the reflected light picked up by satellites from these formations (Fig. 1). Satellite images can therefore be used to make objective assessments of land cover across areas that are too extensive to survey on the ground, too inaccessible or too politically unstable. Some very high-resolution sensors (e.g. Quickbird) collect information at the scale of 1 m^2, while other sensors (e.g. SPOT—Vegetation) possess resolutions of nearer 1 km^2. But there is a trade-off between this spatial resolution and the number of times each satellite passes over the same location (the temporal resolution). The SPOT and

MODIS sensors are housed on satellites that pass over each part of the Earth's surface daily, whereas the 'revisit' times of other sensors are longer (e.g. 14 days for the 28-m^2 resolution Landsat sensors).

The ability to collect information on land cover anywhere in the world, and to access that information from anywhere in the world, clearly makes satellite imagery a powerful tool in the resource-limited field of conservation. However, some ground-based work is normally required to collect data against which image interpretations are subsequently made, or to verify these interpretations. Further, clouds obscure the land surface from passive sensors, meaning these sensors may not be appropriate for monitoring very cloudy areas, especially during the wet season.

Applications for conservation

Studying birds

The number of avian studies that have used remote sensing has increased in recent years (Gottschalk *et al.* 2005). While the majority of papers that have used remote sensing to study the abundance, distribution or diversity of birds have focused on North American or European species, Africa has been the next most frequently represented continent (Fig. 2).

Satellite sensors cannot yet detect individual birds (though satellites have been used directly to monitor large aggregations of birds: Guinet *et al.* 1995). However, the data they collect can be used to estimate the potential distributions of species, which can in turn be used to plan

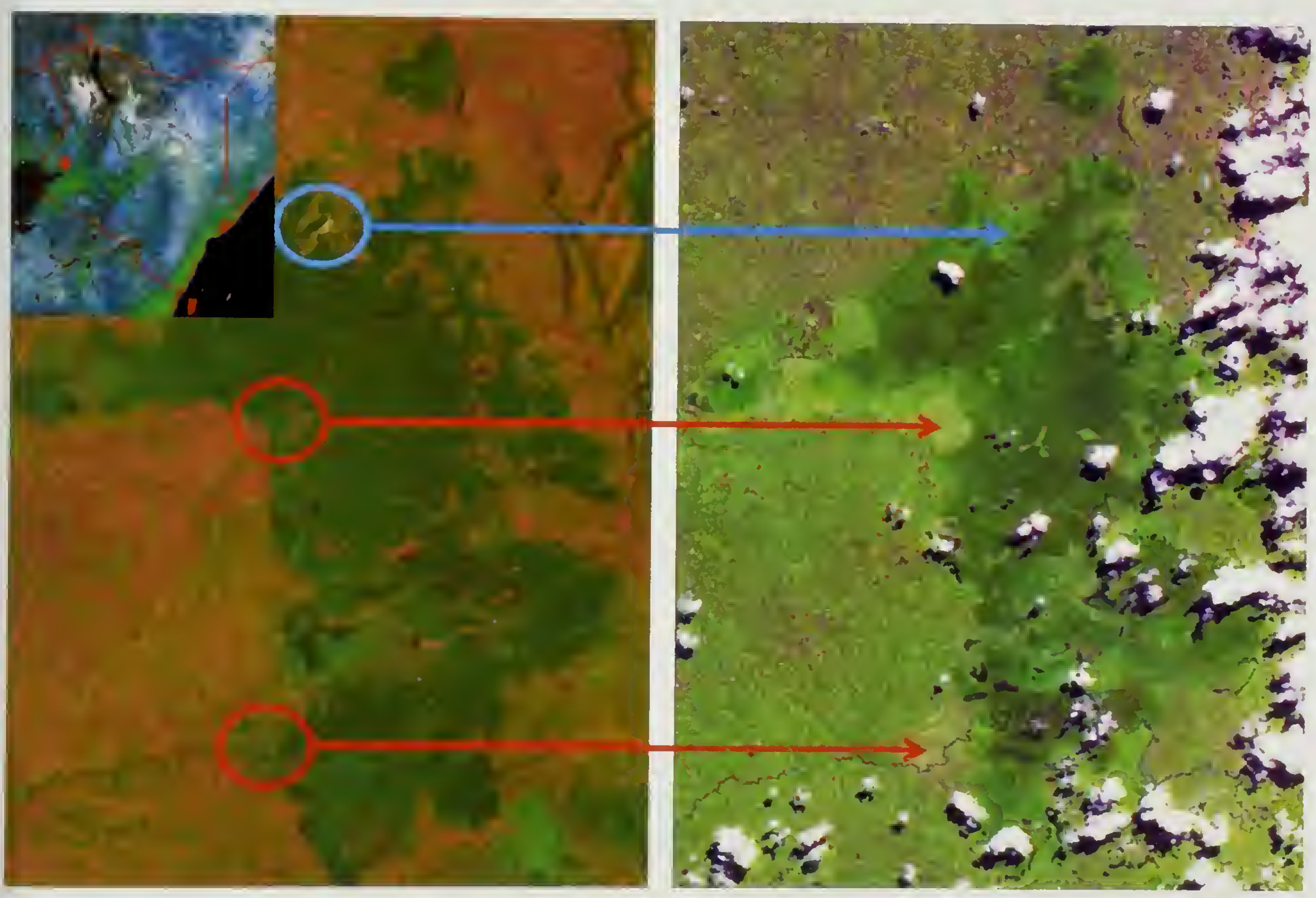

Figure 1. Example of satellite image of Kakamega Forest in western Kenya (inset) in 1975 (left) and 2006 (right). In this combination of bands, dense forest is shown as dark green, open forest, dense shrub or plantations are pale green. Herbaceous formations and agriculture show as pink. Red arrows indicate example areas of forest loss, while the blue arrow indicates forest re-growth. The irregular white objects are clouds, which are often a limiting factor in analysis of passive satellite images.

Un exemple d'une image satellitaire de la forêt de Kakamega à l'ouest du Kenya (en médaillon), en 1975 (à gauche) et en 2006 (à droite). Cette combinaison de bandes montre la forêt dense en vert foncé et la forêt ouverte, les broussailles et les plantations en vert clair. Les formations herbacées et les zones cultivées sont en rose. Les flèches rouges indiquent des zones où la forêt a été détruite, tandis que la flèche bleue indique une zone où la forêt est en train de se régénérer. Les objets blancs irréguliers sont des nuages, qui constituent souvent un facteur limitatif pour l'analyse des images satellitaires passives.

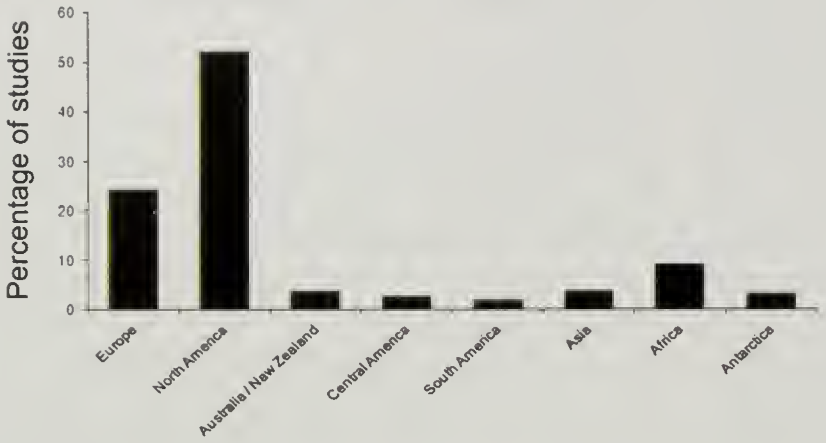

Figure 2. Geographical distribution of published studies (from first in 1982, up to 2007) of bird abundance, distribution or diversity that have used remote sensing data, based on literature searches using keywords (remote sensing, bird, avian, satellite, image).

Distribution géographique d'études publiées sur l'abondance, la distribution ou la diversité aviaires (de la première en 1982 jusqu'en 2007) qui ont utilisé des données obtenues par télédétection, basée sur des recherches de la littérature en utilisant des mots clés (télédétection, oiseau, aviaire, satellite, image).

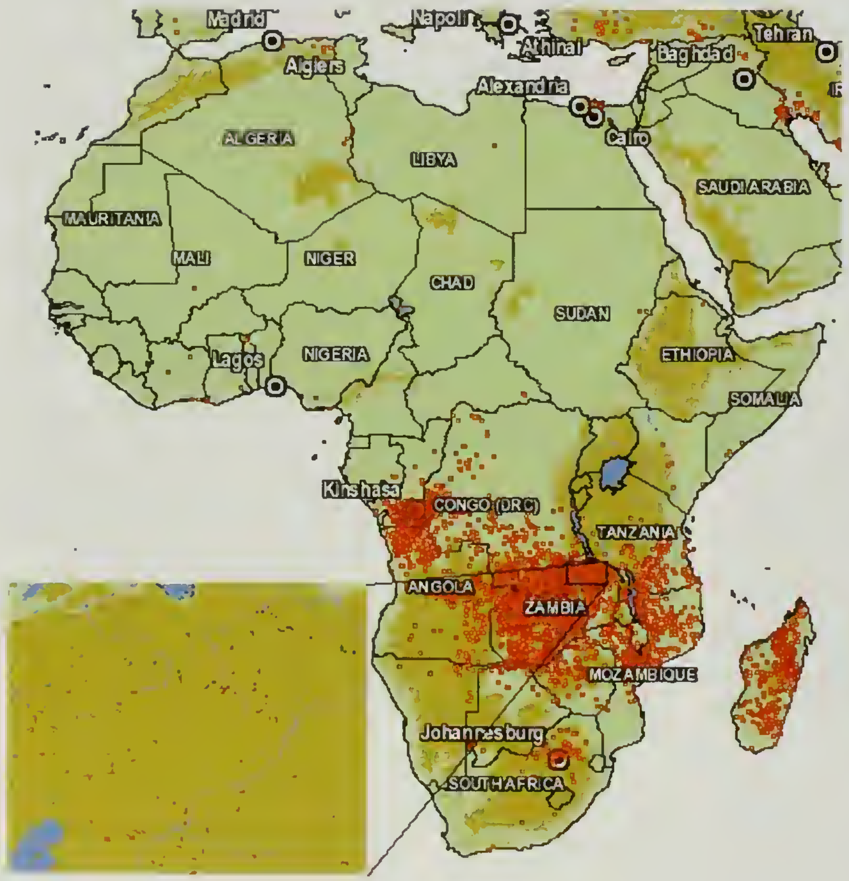

Figure 3. Active fires in Africa on 22 September 2009, including finer detail in north-east Zambia (inset). Data from http://firefly.geog.umd.edu /firemap

Feux en Afrique, le 22 septembre 2009; en médaillon le nord-est de la Zambie. Source : http://firefly.geog.umd.edu /firemap

conservation strategies or priorities. The simplest method is to use known habitat associations of species and categorical land-cover maps (produced from data collected by satellites) and other data (e.g. satellite-derived maps of topography, also now commonly available) to estimate the extent of potentially suitable habitats. These can be based on specifically produced land-cover maps, or readily available pre-processed land-cover maps such as GLC2000 (Mayaux *et al.* 2004) or Africover (www.africover.org). The wide availability of GPS technology now means that bird sightings can be overlaid on satellite images with a high degree of accuracy. Consequently, it is possible to describe apparent habitat associations of species from land-cover maps (Fuller *et al.* 2005).

Bird distributions, or more correctly the suitability of land cover (habitat) for birds, can also be mapped without categorical land-cover maps, by linking bird data directly to satellite image data (in particular, the Normalised Difference Vegetation Index, or NDVI, a measure of vegetation growth; Tucker *et al.* 1979) and other variables, such as topography or climate (e.g. Osborne *et al.* 2001). As with all distribution modelling, the accuracy of these maps must be verified, ideally using a subset of data not used in their development and, if possible, by further field surveys. Once verified, however, these maps can be invaluable to conservation. They permit ranges and population sizes to be estimated and potentially new, previously undiscovered populations to be found, even of globally threatened species such as Rudd's Lark *Heteromirafra ruddi* (Vulnerable) in South Africa (e.g. Maphisa *et al.* 2008). In the case of the Critically Endangered congeneric Liben Lark *H. sidamoensis*, these approaches highlighted the plight of the species. Models indicated that there were no other areas of habitat similar to those in the species' tiny range, other than a patch some 700 km distant close to the postulated range of the Critically Endangered congeneric and largely unknown Archer's Lark *H. archeri* (Donald *et al.* 2010).

Satellite image data have also proved to be useful in studies of species richness and diversity, as both correlate with spatial and temporal variation in the NDVI (e.g. Nøhr & Jørgensen 1997, Hurlbert & Haskell 2003, Bonn *et al.* 2004). Diversity increases with increasing spatial variation in land cover, and more productive areas (with higher NDVI) are often capable of supporting more species. The strength and ubiquity of these relationships suggests they could be applied to the prediction of species richness in under-studied areas. While this could enable areas of potential conservation concern to be identified (e.g. Johnston *et al.* 1998), areas of high species richness may not overlap with those of recognised conservation importance (Orme *et al.* 2005), meaning more research may yet be needed on the topic, but the possibility is there.

Monitoring land cover

Monitoring is essential for effective conservation, permitting problems to be identified, solutions developed and resources targeted. Bird monitoring in Africa is improving, and common initiatives are also in development in several countries. However, many sites of conservation importance, including many protected areas and BirdLife International's Important Bird Areas (IBAs) still do not benefit from any sort of systematic biodiversity monitoring. Satellite image data could help fill this gap (e.g. Turner *et al.* 2003, Buchanan *et al.* 2009a), by informing conservationists about the distribution of land cover (habitat) and how it is being altered. The most prevalent threats to the African IBA network are land-cover changes, many of which may be tracked using satellite images (Buchanan *et al.* 2009b), suggesting that remote sensing could play an important role in monitoring the integrity of the continent's most important sites for nature conservation. Satellite-based monitoring can cover extensive areas across multiple time periods through the availability of historical images (back to the 1970s in some cases; Fig. 1). To date, it is mostly forest loss that has been monitored using this method (e.g. Achard *et al.* 2002), but it is possible to track changes in other habitats (see, e.g., Brink & Eva 2009). Indeed, a collaborative project between BirdLife, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (BirdLife Partner in the UK) and global experts in the Global Environment Monitoring team at the European Commission's Joint Research Centre in Italy is piloting satellite image-based monitoring of all habitats in African IBAs using higher resolution images (Buchanan *et al.* 2009c). The development of new methods and increasing image availability will, it is hoped, see remote sensing routinely used to track land-cover change across the continent in conjunction with more traditional field-based monitoring.

Slightly lower resolution satellite data are now available in near real-time (e.g. SPOT-Vegetation, MODIS), making almost simultaneous monitoring a possibility. Wallin *et al.* (1992) suggested that such monitoring could be used to identify areas that were at risk from Red-billed Quelea *Quelea quelea*. While this was never delivered, experts are now in a position to develop near real-time monitoring systems designed primarily for the use of conservationists. A system for tracking fires is already available (Justice *et al.* 2002; Fig. 3), but other potential applications include systems that monitor the extent of waterbodies in West Africa (Haas *et al.* 2009). Further developments are underway and these should, in the next few years, deliver systems than can detect rapid changes, as well as long-term modification, including degradation, of vegetation across the continent, based on real-time data from the entire continent (if the land is not obscured by cloud). The potential value of such information to conservationists could be enormous.

Next steps

The technology is available now to improve our knowledge of bird distributions, track historical changes in land cover and develop a system to alert conservationists when land cover undergoes dramatic change. The use of these technologies will increase further in studies of African birds as data become more readily accessible to conservation organisations (e.g. Group on Earth Observation 2007, US Geological Survey 2008), as the types of data and number of sensors collecting the data increase, and as computing power and data storage capacity makes image processing faster and easier. Capacity development and increased resources are needed though to make full use of these capabilities. While international structures (e.g. Scholes *et al.* 2008) could make a substantial contribution to biodiversity conservation, smaller scale initiatives are needed to ensure that conservation in Africa benefits.

Remote sensing could make a great contribution to bird conservation in Africa. However, it must not be considered a panacea (not least because cloud cover can be a serious problem), and will never replace the need for field data. These are needed for processing or interpreting images, and without them the accuracy, and hence value, of remote sensing outputs cannot be assessed. Everyone can help, especially birders in Africa. Sharing of georeferenced photographs of birds and habitats (for example, through Google Earth) could provide a very useful archive of data for validating land-cover mapping. Birdwatchers also increasingly carry hand-held GPS units in the field; with a little extra effort, these could be used to record the precise locations of scarce or rare birds in the field. Online databases exist to collect such information (e.g. www.worldbirds.org), which could help develop and validate distribution models.

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A new form of thrush babbler *Ptyrticus* sp. from the Bakossi Mountains, Cameroon?

by Isabelle Faucher[a] *and Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire*[b]

Un nouveau taxon de grive-akalat *Ptyrticus* sp. dans les Monts Bakossi, Cameroun ? En 1998, un couple d'oiseaux non identifiés a été vu par deux fois dans la forêt des Monts Bakossi : il pourrait s'agir d'un nouveau taxon de grive-akalat *Ptyrticus* sp.

The Bakossi Mountains, in western Cameroon, lie *c.*15 km west of Mount Manenguba and north-west of Mount Kupe. With Mount Cameroon and Mount Oku, the Bakossis are one of the three most important sites for the conservation of local bird endemics along the Cameroon chain, with a very large area of forest (F. Dowsett-Lemaire *in* Fotso *et al.* 2001). The forest covers an altitudinal range of 150–1,800 m, with *c.*200 km^2 of mid-altitude and montane forest (above 1,000 m), and nearly twice that area of lowland rain forest in the south-west. The 'Edib Hills' in the centre lie mostly between 1,100 and 1,450 m and receive very high rainfall, probably >5,000 mm p.a. A few surveys in the late 1990s and in 2000 identified at least 330 bird species. The central forests have important populations of, *inter alia*, the globally threatened Mount Kupe Bushshrike *Malaconotus kupeensis*, Green-breasted Bushshrike *M. gladiator* and White-throated Mountain Babbler *Kupeornis gilberti* (Faucher 1999, Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2000).

In 1998 IF spent nearly eight months in the field studying primates, especially Drill *Mandrillus leucophaeus* and Preuss's Monkeys *Cercopithecus preussi*. She also took notes on other mammals, and birds (Faucher 1999). On two occasions, in October and November, she observed a bird species that she was unable to identify: each time, a pair was involved, hopping on the ground and over logs in a 'follow-my-leader' fashion. This was under closed canopy, in primary forest at *c.*1,100 m, within 1 km of her base camp near Edib. The base camp was *c.*2 km south-west of Lake Edib (04°57'N 09°38'E). The forest in that area consists of a 30-m tall canopy where stilt-rooted *Uapaca* and *Santiria trimera* are conspicuous, as well as *Pycnanthus angolensis* and *P. marchalianus*,

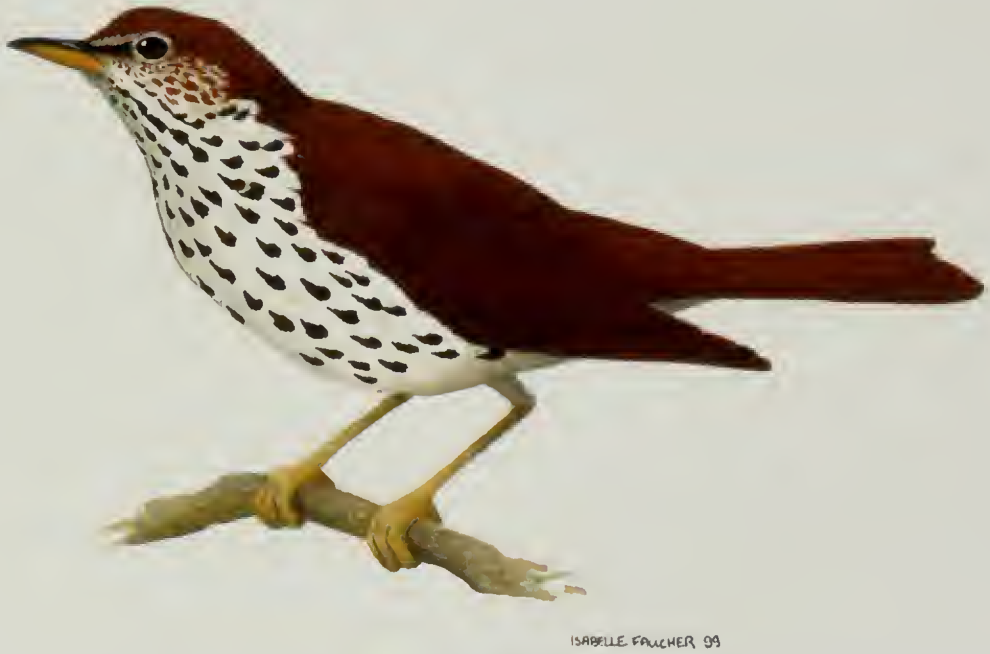

Figure 1. Painting of a possible new form of thrush babbler *Ptyrticus* sp. seen in the Bakossi Mountains, Cameroon (Isabelle Faucher)

Peinture représentant peut-être un nouveau taxon de grive-akalat *Ptyrticus* sp. vu dans les Monts Bakossi, Cameroun (Isabelle Faucher) tall Rubiaceae, Sapotaceae, various Guttiferae and Caesalpiniaceae; the understorey is fairly open.

Fig. 1 shows a painting of the bird. It was seen under good conditions, as the observer was sitting quietly watching monkeys. Given several characters of the plumage (warm chestnut and uniform upperparts, details of the head, with a distinctive line of pale feathers in front of the eye and mottled cheeks), and the behaviour, this appears to be a kind of thrush babbler *Ptyrticus* sp. However, there are important differences from the only known species of the genus, Spotted Thrush Babbler *P. turdinus*, especially the underparts: in the Bakossi bird they are spotted throughout, rather than the spotting being restricted to the breast, and the spots are darker brown. Spotted Thrush Babbler has a circum-Congo distribution, being locally common in forest patches in the forest/savanna transition zones on both sides of the equator, from Angola and Zambia to central Cameroon (Fry *et al.* 2000). The forest at Bakossi belongs to another biome, as it is within the Guineo-Congolian forest zone *sensu stricto*, intergrading with montane forest of the Afromontane region.

It is probable that we are dealing with a new form, possibly a new species, of thrush babbler. The Bakossi range and adjacent mountains are very rich in endemic species of plants (Cheek *et al.* 2004) and animals. A new frog, *Leptodactylodon wildi*, was discovered in 1998 near Kodmin in the eastern Bakossi Mountains (Amiet & Dowsett-Lemaire 2000) and later also near Edib (pers. obs.). M. Cheek and colleagues discovered several new species of trees and shrubs in the late 1990s (Cheek *et al.* 2004). Near Edib IF observed (and painted) what appeared to be a new species of duiker *Cephalophus* sp. (the size of Bay Duiker *C. dorsalis*, with thinner legs, different coloration and striking white spectacles around the eyes) and an apparently new species of squirrel (Faucher 1999).

The mystery bird is evidently rather rare. FDL and R. J. Dowsett did not come across it during six weeks of field work (in March–April 1998, February 1999, March 2000). In March 2000 in particular, they spent a week at IF's base camp to look for this bird, RJD erecting 300 m of mist-nets. FDL never heard anything that might have resembled the song of Spotted Thrush Babbler; however, March–April coincides with the start of the rains, a time when some birds may become quiet as they are moulting. No additional field work has been undertaken in the region, we believe, since the year 2000, although the Bakossi Mountains are still visited most years by bird tours for very brief periods. By 2000 the central and northern areas of the massif were relatively intact, given the very low human population pressure, but there was increasing encroachment into the lowlands for cash crops such as cocoa, and a new road along the south-eastern edge was being re-opened, which could have encouraged new settlements.

This note is published in the hope that it will encourage further field work in the area and help reveal the identity of this mysterious bird.

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First record of Rufous-tailed Palm Thrush *Cichladusa ruficauda* for Cameroon

Kevin Lambeets[a]*, Geert Beckers*[b] *and Nicolas Vanermen*[c]

Première mention de la Cichladuse à queue rousse *Cichladusa ruficauda* pour le Cameroun. Le 26 février 2010, une Cichladuse à queue rousse *Cichladusa ruficauda* a été observée dans un jardin à Douala, Cameroun. Ceci constitue la première donnée pour le pays de cette espèce, dont l'aire de distribution le long de la côte s'étend ainsi d'environ 600 km vers le nord.

On 26 February 2010, from the balcony of the Hôtel Foyer du Marin overlooking the harbour of Douala, Cameroon, we noticed a slender, thrush-like bird with a bright rufous tail contrasting with the more brownish-rufous upperparts in the dense scrub of the garden below. The head-sides were grey with well-marked dark lores and a dark eye-stripe. The breast, upper belly and flanks were pale greyish, while the rest of the underparts were dirty white to creamy buff. The eyes were dull red and the legs slaty grey. The bird was smaller and slimmer than a nearby African Thrush *Turdus pelios*. It often disappeared for some minutes, then appeared again in an open spot within the dense vegetation. The bird seemed rather skulking but not shy, as it once came as close as *c.*1 m while foraging in a palm tree. We observed it through binoculars for *c.*15 minutes from a distance of *c.*10 m. After consultating Borrow & Demey (2004), we identified it as a Rufous-tailed Palm Thrush *Cichladusa ruficauda*. The observed features made identification straightforward. We took a few poor-quality photographs on which the key features are visible (Fig. 1).

Rufous-tailed Palm Thrush principally occurs in thickets and savanna with ivory palm *Hyphaene ventricosa* and oil palm *Elaeis guineensis*, plantations, dry lowland baobab–acacia woodland or secondary forests, but is also found around houses and gardens (Keith *et al.* 1992, Collar 2005). Its known range extends from the southern Gabon coast and the lower Congo River to the south-western Central African Republic, south through west Angola, just reaching Namibia in the extreme north-west (Borrow & Demey 2004, Collar 2005). The northernmost coastal record is from a garden in the small town of Omboué, Gabon, in September 2003 (N. Borrow *in Bull. ABC* 11: 73). There seem to be no records from the relatively well-watched Libreville area (N. Borrow *in litt.* 2010). Our record thus extends the species' range north along the coast by *c.*600 km and is the first for Cameroon.

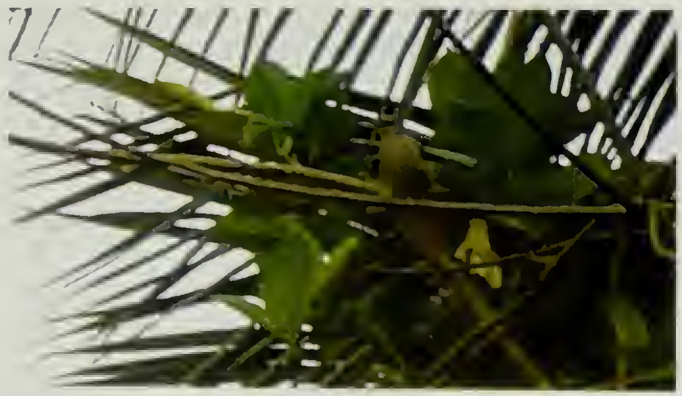

Figure 1. Rufous-tailed Palm Thrush / Cichladuse à queue rousse *Cichladusa ruficauda*, Douala, Cameroon, 26 February 2010 (K. Lambeets)

Acknowledgements

We thank Nik Borrow and Ron Demey for providing information concerning the occurrence of Rufous-tailed Palm Thrush in western Africa and Hans Matheve for helping with literature.

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A Palearctic Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica rufula* in Zambia

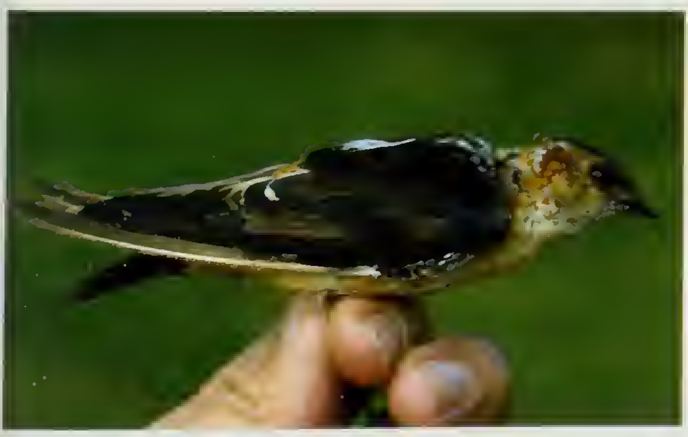
Bennie van den Brink[a] and Pete Leonard[b]

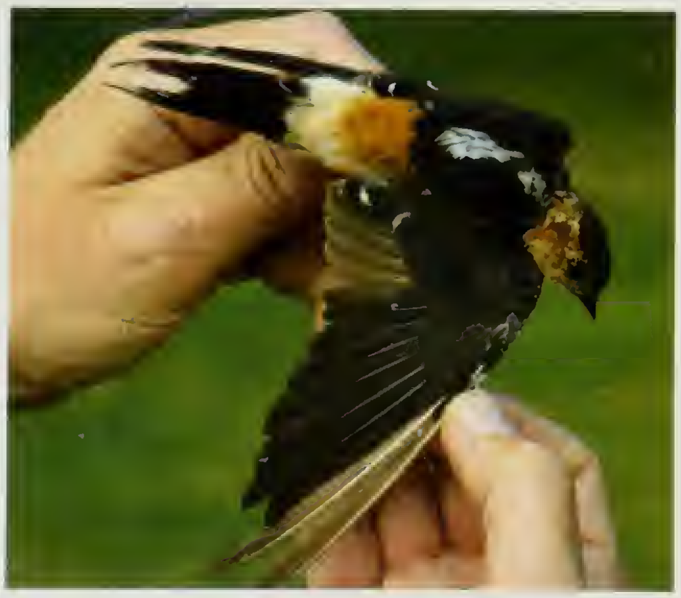
Une Hirondelle rousseline paléarctique *Cecropis daurica rufula* en Zambie. Une Hirondelle rousseline *Cecropis daurica* de la sous-espèce paléarctique *rufula* a été capturée près de Kabwe, au centre de la Zambie, le 27 janvier 2009. Ceci constitue la donnée la plus méridionale en Afrique de ce taxon, qui est supposé d'hiverner principalement en Afrique de l'Ouest et de l'Est.

Between November 2008 and February 2009, a Dutch team trapped Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* at roosts in central Zambia to obtain data on their wintering strategies. On 27 January 2009, mist-nets were set within a reedbed on Mafundzalo Ranch near Kabwe (14°18’425”S 28°27’700”E) and birds were attracted using a tape lure. The roost was used by *c.*1,000 Barn Swallows, of which 82 were trapped, ringed and released. Among them a Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica* was discovered which had apparently intended to roost with the Barn Swallows (Figs. 1–2).

The bird was in heavy moult with a primary wing moult score of 30 (555554100) and a tail moult score of 20 (555320). It was also replacing the head- and body-feathers, giving the bird an untidy appearance. The presence of dull brown contour feathers on the crown and mantle (as opposed to glossy blue-black) as well as short, dull brown outer rectrices indicated that it was a juvenile. Other biometrics were as follows: wing length (flattened and straightened): 124 mm, tarsus: 14.64 mm, mass: 22.5 g, fat score: 0, pectoral muscle score: 2.

It only became clear that the record was unusual subsequently, following correspondence between BvdB and PL. In Zambia, the race *C. d. emini* is resident near rocky hills in just a few areas on the country's northern and eastern borders at 1,130–2,200 m (Dowsett *et al.* 2008), thus the locality in question is >600 km from the nearest known areas of regular occurrence. It also became clear that the bird might have belonged to the migratory Palearctic race, *C. d. rufula*, which suggestion was later confirmed following correspondence with other ornithologists. Distinctive features included the pale underparts with striped breast and flanks (*C. d. emini* is plain rufous, occasionally with very faint streaking), the complete chestnut collar and particularly the bicoloured rump (*C. d. emini* has a uniformly medium or dark rufous rump) (Turner & Rose 1989, Keith *et al.* 1992). Biometrics were of no assistance with the subspecific identification.





Figures 1–2. Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica* of the Palearctic race *rufula*, trapped near Kabwe, central Zambia, 27 January 2009 (J. Santing)

Hirondelle rousseline *Cecropis daurica* de la sous-espèce paléarctique *rufula*, capturée près de Kabwe, au centre de la Zambie, 27 janvier 2009 (J. Santing)

One apparent anomaly that required resolution was the extensive white visible on the mantle. Close inspection and comparison with specimens confirmed that this was a result of the white feather bases being visible due to the bird being in moult and missing several contour feathers. Furthermore, it appeared to be a common feature in moulting Red-rumped Swallows (of various subspecies) based on specimens.

Five races of Red-rumped Swallow occur in Africa (Keith *et al.* 1992). Of these, *C. d. domicella*, *C. d. melanocrissus* and *C. d. kumboensis* are resident in various parts of the northern tropics. *C. d. emini* is a bird of more mountainous terrain from south-east Sudan south to Zambia and Malaŵi. Finally, the principally Palearctic-breeding *C. d. rufula*, , appears to winter mainly in West and eastern Africa, though data are sparse. The Zambian record therefore represents a new southerly limit for this taxon.

There are several other records of vagrant Red-rumped Swallows from Congo-Kinshasa (two), Zambia (one) and Zimbabwe (at least seven) (Keith *et al.* 1992, Harrison *et al.* 1997, Dowsett *et al.* 2008). None has been identified to subspecies though it seems more likely that these records pertain to overshooting migratory *C. d. rufula* rather than dispersal by the essentially sedentary *C. d. emini*. It is perhaps notable that several other Palearctic migrants that winter in the northern tropics have reached southern Africa as vagrants, e.g. European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*, Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*, Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* and Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* (Hockey *et al.* 2005).

Acknowledgements

We thank Xavier Rufray, Bob Dowsett, Nik Borrow and Rob Bijlsma for their comments on this record. We are also grateful to Mark Adams of the Natural History Museum, Tring, for sending photographs of the different races held in that collection.

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First record of Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* for the Comoros

Richard White

Première observation du Faucon crécerellette *Falco naumanni* aux Comores. Le 19 mars 2009, un Faucon crécerellette *Falco naumanni* femelle ou immature a été identifié et photographié sur l'île de Petite Terre, Mayotte. Le Faucon crécerellette est un migrateur paléarctique au long cours qui hiverne à travers l'Afrique sub-saharienne. Ceci constitue la première donnée pour les Comores. Sur les îles au sud-ouest de l'Océan indien, l'espèce avait auparavant seulement été notée, comme occasionelle, aux Seychelles.

On 19 March 2009, while visiting the crater on Petite Terre, Mayotte, I observed a rusty-brown falcon, which I identified as a female or immature kestrel species. As there are no resident or regular migrant kestrels on the island (Louette 2004), I realised that it must be a vagrant, and took a description, while my companion M. Melford obtained photographs (Fig. 1). I was unable to visit the site again so it is not known how long the bird was present.

I watched the bird for *c.*20 minutes at >30 m in good light. It was mainly perched at eye level in small trees around the edge of the crater. On several occasions it made short flights over the crater, apparently attempting to catch insects. No other species were available for direct comparison, but the general impression was of a medium-sized, long-winged falcon. The upperparts were quite uniformly rusty-brown with fine black barring and the underparts were paler with dark streaks. The head was uniform with only a faint moustachial stripe. The flight feathers were dark, contrasting with the paler mantle, and the tail was pale brown with a dark subterminal band. A small central tail feather projection was noted. The legs and cere were yellow, and the talons appeared pale.

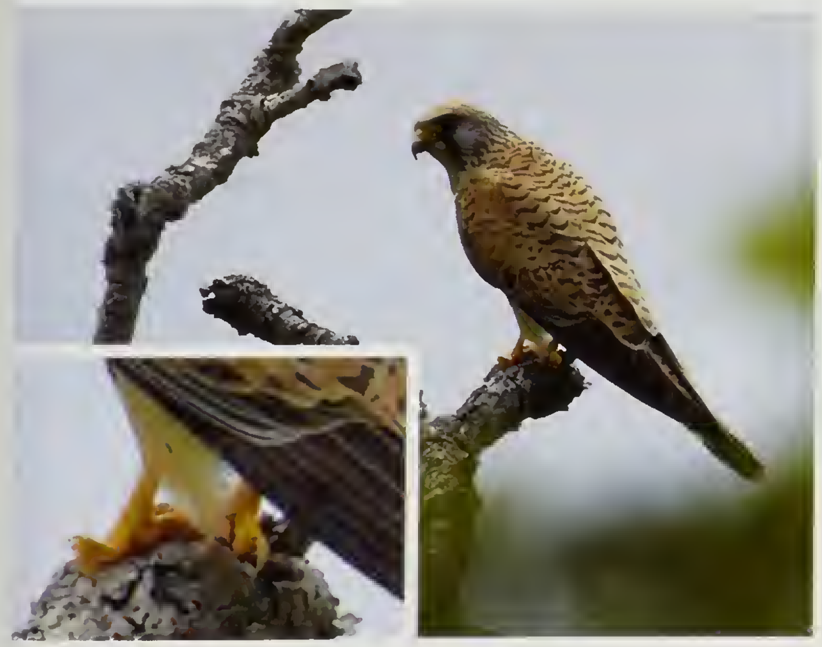

Figure 1. Immature / female Lesser Kestel *Falco naumanni*, Petite Terre, Mayotte, 19 March 2009 (Michael Melford). The inset shows the pale talons that are typical of the species.

Faucon crécerellette *Falco naumanni* femelle ou immature, Petite Terre, Mayotte, 19 mars 2009 (Michael Melford). En médaillon : les ongles pâles caractéristiques de l'espèce.

Four species of kestrel were considered potential vagrants: Lesser *F. naumanni*, Common *F. tinnunculus*, Madagascar *F. newtoni* and Seychelles *F. araea*. I have extensive previous experience of all four. The two last-named species were discounted due to the impression that the bird was distinctly larger than both Madagascar and especially Seychelles Kestrels. Measurements given by Orta (2004) are: Lesser Kestrel 29–32 cm, Madagascar Kestrel 25 cm and Seychelles Kestrel 15–23 cm. Based on these measurements, Lesser Kestrel would be *c.*20% larger than Madagascar Kestrel and 50% larger than Seychelles Kestrel; differences of such magnitudes should be apparent in the field. Being sedentary, Madagascar and Seychelles Kestrels are also less likely vagrants.

The lack of any grey feathers indicates that the bird was a female or immature. Separation of Lesser Kestrel from Common Kestrel in this plumage can be problematic, so efforts were made to observe the critical identification features: the relative length of the central tail feathers and talon colour. The small central tail feather projection supports the identification of Lesser Kestrel, while subsequent examination of the photographs confirmed that the bird did have pale talons (Fig. 1) further pointing to *F. naumanni*.

Lesser Kestrel is a transequatorial migrant between its breeding areas at 30°N to 55°N and non-breeding areas in sub-Saharan Africa. It arrives in the wintering areas in October–November and departs in late January–April (Orta 1994, Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001). The timing of the Comoros record coincides with the species' departure from southern Africa and records from Seychelles in December and April–May (Skerrett & Bullock 2001). It seems possible that Lesser Kestrel will also occur as a vagrant to Madagascar, but I have been unable to locate any records (Hawkins & Goodman 2003). This is the first record of Lesser Kestrel for the Comoros archipelago.

Acknowledgements

Michel Louette, Royal Museum for Central Africa, Belgium, confirmed the lack of previous records of Lesser Kestrel in the Comoros and commented on this note.

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Grey Parrots *Psittacus erithacus* successfully nesting in a suburban house in Kampala, Uganda

Lilian Twanza[a] and Derek Pomeroy[a]

Des Perroquets jaco *Psittacus erithacus* nichant avec succès dans une maison à Kampala, Ouganda. Un couple de Perroquets jaco *Psittacus erithacus* qui, depuis début 2008, passait la nuit dans le toit d'une maison à deux étages à Makerere West, Kampala, Ouganda, y a niché et élevé deux jeunes en 2009. Les œufs ont apparemment été pondus début février. C'est la première fois que la nidification dans un immeuble est signalée pour des Perroquets jaco vivant en liberté.

Grey Parrot *Psittacus erithacus* normally inhabits primary and secondary lowland rainforests, as well as forest edges, clearings and gallery forests, and nests in holes 10–30 m above ground in large trees (Fry *et al.* 1988). This, however, does not apply to a pair of Grey Parrots that have roosted in the roof of a two-storey residential house in Makerere West, Kampala, Uganda, since early 2008 (W. A. Zawedde pers. comm.) and that subsequently also bred there (Fig. 1). The house is *c.*5 km from the city centre and 2–3 km from the outskirts, in an area of suburban housing and small businesses.

We first checked the roost on 27 February 2009, when photographs taken by R. Kiryo revealed an egg (Fig. 2). The nest was under the eaves, *c.*1.5 m from the lowest coping tile on the roof, which was open at its lowest edge, and was made from wood 'shaved' from the rafters supporting the roof. The birds were often seen resting on the guttering near the entrance to their nest, particularly in the hour or two before roosting, usually at *c.*19.00 hrs. Two young were seen on 4 April, when they had started developing sparse grey down and, based on Fry *et al.* (1988), were estimated to be *c.*1 month old. They were observed in the nest until 13 June when the nest was empty. It is believed that the young fledged because DP saw four birds circling the house on 10 June. This suggests that eggs were laid in early February. Egg laying in Uganda, based on Carswell *et al.* (2005), has been recorded in May, July and September. All four birds continued to roost in the roof after the young had fledged, and were still doing so at the time of writing (August 2009).

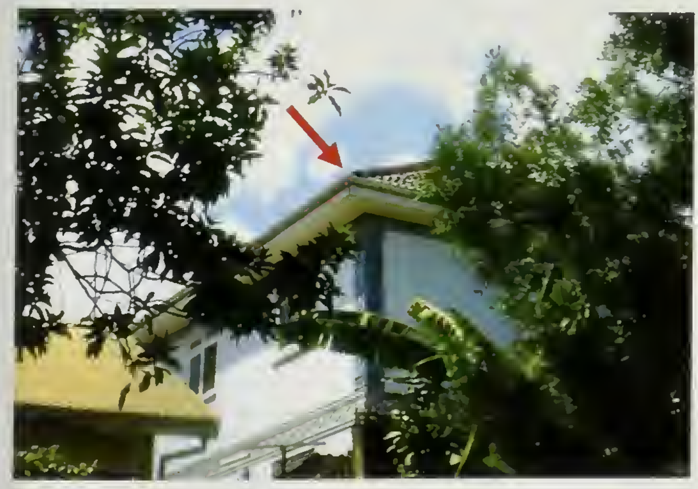

Figure 1. The house where a pair of Grey Parrots *Psittacus erithacus* nested, with the red arrow showing the entrance hole, Makerere West, Kampala, Uganda, 2009 (Lilian Twanza)

La maison dans laquelle le couple de Perroquets jaco *Psittacus erithacus* a niché, la flèche rouge indiquant l'entrée, Makerere West, Kampala, Ouganda, 2009 (Lilian Twanza)

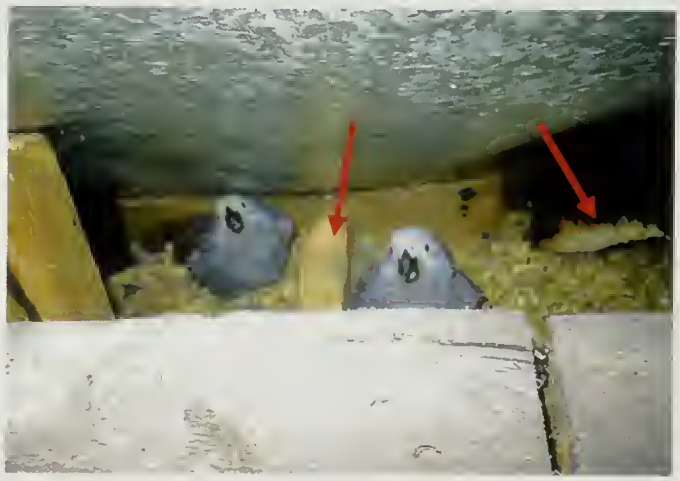

Figure 2. Two young Grey Parrots *Psittacus erithacus* in the nest, Kampala, Uganda, 23 May 2009. The red arrows show rafters that have been 'shaved' (Lilian Twanza)

Deux jeunes Perroquets jaco *Psittacus erithacus* au nid, Kampala, Ouganda, 23 mai 2009. Les flèches rouges indiquent les chevrons qui ont été 'rognés' (Lilian Twanza)

It is unknown why these parrots chose to nest in the house or how they got there, but it could have been the next best alternative to a tree hole. It is also suspected that the birds might originally have escaped or been released from captivity, although they appeared to behave like wild parrots in every other respect. Many Grey Parrots are kept as pets in Kampala (C. Dranzoa pers. comm.). They are quite commonly seen flying over the city, which has many trees. Grey Parrots were also recorded roosting in a house in the Central African Republic in the 1980s (R. Massa pers. comm.) but this is the first time that free-living birds have been reported to nest in a building.

Acknowledgements

We thank Dr David Siriri and his family for granting access to their house, where the parrots were nesting, Osman Mwebe for assisting during our observations, and Nigel Collar for commenting on this note.

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Flamingos on the runway!

Doug M. Harebottle[a] and Mark D. Anderson[b]

Des Flamants sur la piste. Le 2 octobre 2009, un groupe de 50 Flamants nains *Phoeniconaias minor* a été photographié sur la piste du nouvel aéroport international de Sikhuphe au Swaziland. Les oiseaux ont probablement été contraints de se poser pendant une violente tempête de pluie et ont pris la piste pour une zone humide. Le groupe comprenait dix juvéniles, ce qui indique que les oiseaux venaient de leur site de reproduction. Leur point de départ ainsi que leur destination sont toutefois difficiles à déterminer, mais ils utilisaient probablement une voie de migration est-ouest à travers le Swaziland, venant peut-être du Mozambique du sud. Des observations anecdotiques telles que celle-ci pourraient aider à mieux comprendre les mouvements de l'espèce.

On 2 October 2009, at 08.00 hrs, a flock of 50 Lesser Flamingos *Phoeniconaias minor* was photographed on the runway at the new site for the Sikhuphe International Airport in Swaziland. The area (26°25.5'S 31°41.0'E) is *c.*45 km north-east of Manzini in mostly *Acacia* savanna. The flock comprised 40 adults and ten juveniles (Figs. 1–2).

To our knowledge, this is the first recorded incident of flamingos on a tarred airport runway. Guilherme *et al.* (2005) reported a flock of Puna Flamingos *Phoenicoparrus jamesi* at Rio Branco International Airport, Acre, Brazil, but it is unclear if the birds landed on the tarred surface or merely adjacent to the runway. In May 2007, near Lake Bogoria in central Kenya, ten dead Lesser Flamingos were found on a major roadway (B. Childress *in litt.* 2007). But what caused the flamingos to use this artificial surface at Sikhuphe International Airport? According to T. van Vuuren, who photographed the birds, a large thunderstorm passed through the area the night before and *c.*35 mm of rain fell during this period, and it was still drizzling when the photographs were taken. We suspect that the birds were forced to make an 'emergency landing' to avoid the strong winds and heavy rain. They may have even been blown off course and in opting to land discovered the wet runway, which seemed to mirror a wetland (Fig. 3). This was also surmised to be the case for the Brazilian and Kenyan flamingos. The Rio Branco incident followed strong winds associated with a cold front that passed through the region in late April 2005, and led the authors to believe that the flock had been blown off course (Guilherme *et al.* 2005). The Kenyan incident was associated with a huge rainstorm that passed through the region the previous night, suggesting that the birds were forced to land during the storm; their deaths probably resulted from being hit by passing vehicles (M. Virani *in litt.* 2007). The Swaziland birds remained on the runway for *c.*1 hour before flying off and landing in grassland at Panata Ranch, 10 km away, and a few hundred metres from the Umbulozi River. Here they remained for a few hours before flying back to the airport, at *c.*12.15 hrs. At 14.00 hrs T. van Vuuren left the site with the birds still on the runway. The following day no flamingos were reported anywhere in the immediate vicinity and it can be assumed that they left the site the previous evening. Two days later, on 4 October, a single juvenile was reported by W. & C. Mundel, owners of Panata Ranch. The bird was in poor

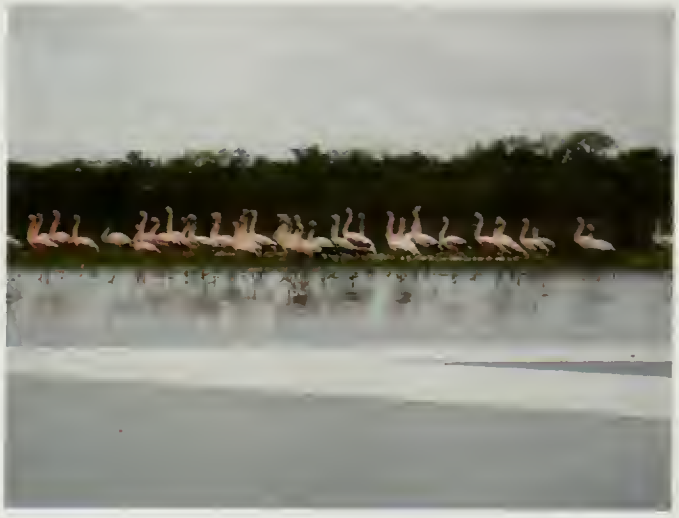

Figure 1. Flock of 50 Lesser Flamingos *Phoeniconaias minor* on the newly built runway at Sikhuphe International Airport, Swaziland, 2 October 2009 (Tienie van Vuuren)

Un groupe de 50 Flamants nains *Phoeniconaias minor* sur la piste nouvellement construite de l'Aéroport international de Sikhuphe, Swaziland, 2 octobre 2009 (Tienie van Vuuren)

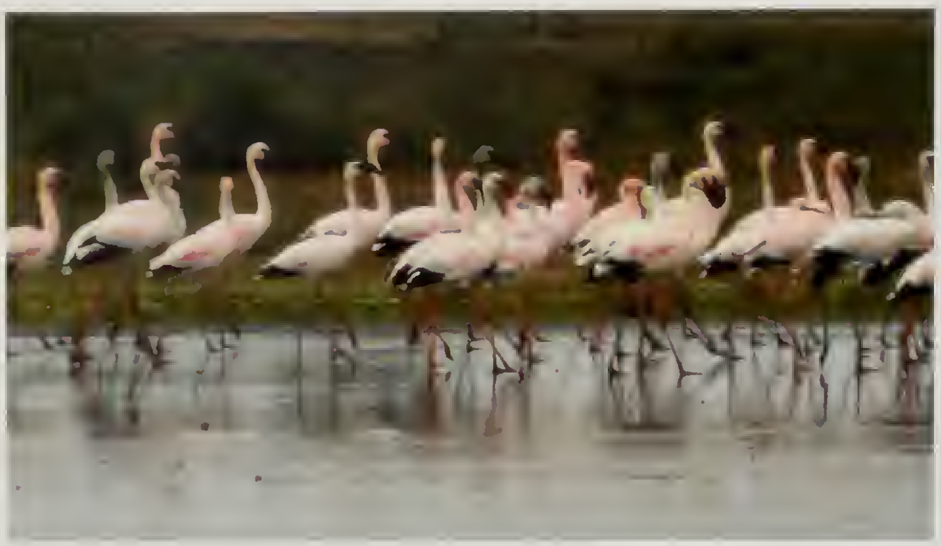

Figure 2. Part of the flock with juveniles amongst the adults, Sikhuphe International Airport, Swaziland, 2 October 2009 (Tienie van Vuuren)

Une partie du groupe, avec des juvéniles parmi les adultes, Aéroport international de Sikhuphe, Swaziland, 2 octobre 2009 (Tienie van Vuuren)

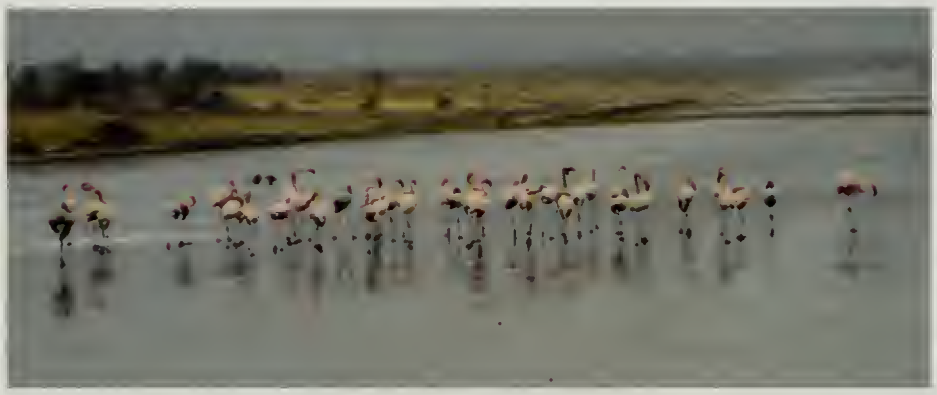

Figure 3. Lesser Flamingos *Phoeniconaias minor* ready for take-off, Sikhuphe International Airport, Swaziland, 2 October 2009 (Tienie van Vuuren). Note how wet the runway is.

Flamants nains *Phoeniconaias minor* prêts pour le décollage, Aéroport international de Sikhuphe, Swaziland, 2 octobre 2009 (Tienie van Vuuren). Noter comme la piste est mouillée.

condition and seemed exhausted, and was taken to a farm dam inside a game camp. The bird spent two days at the dam recovering before it flew off.

Where did these birds come from, and where were they going? That the flock numbered several juveniles indicates that the flamingos had probably left their breeding grounds a few months previously. Consequently, they could have come from one of the two traditional breeding sites in southern Africa—Etosha Pan, in Namibia, or Sua Pan in Botswana. Both are north-west of Sikhuphe, Etosha Pan *c.*1,800 km distant and Sua Pan 860 km. It is also possible that they came from Kamfers Dam, a newly established breeding site for Lesser Flamingos in southern Africa (Anderson 2008). The dam is located on the outskirts of Kimberley, in South Africa's Northern Province *c.*750 km south-east of Sikhuphe. Based on this they were perhaps heading east to southern Mozambique, where the species is known to occur almost year-round (Parker 1999). However, in light of the fewer recent records from this region (B. Childress *in litt.* 2007), it seems that Lesser Flamingos may no longer be using suitable sites in southern Mozambique, but further monitoring is needed to substantiate this. It is hypothesised (Simmons & Borello 1999) that birds may use the east coast of Africa to commute between East Africa and southern Africa. Based on this, the origin of the flamingos could also have been Lake Natron, the species' only other regular breeding site in the entire region. This would infer that the birds moved south, following the Mozambique coastline and were moving west to inland localities in South Africa. However, the limited ringing of flamingos and the recent satellite-tracking of Lesser Flamingos in Botswana and Kenya (McCullogh *et al.* 2003, Childress *et al.* 2007) has provided evidence for only regional movements by the species, with no movement by any ringed / satellite-tagged birds between East Africa and southern Africa. As few records exist for both Lesser and Greater Flamingos *Phoenicopterus* (*ruber*) *roseus* in Swaziland (see Harrison *et al.* 1997), it is probable that Lesser Flamingos use sites in this region only as brief stop-over points.

This observation provides some anecdotal evidence of movement of Lesser Flamingos in the sub-region; such *ad hoc* reports often provide valuable information on species' movements and distributions. Observers, whether birders or landowners, should therefore be encouraged to report such incidental records to their local bird club or national wildlife agency. Sightings can also be submitted to web-based systems: in southern Africa, records can be captured under the auspices of the second southern African Bird Atlas Project (http://sabap2.adu.org.za), Kenyan records can be logged using Kenya Birdfinder (http://www.worldbirds.org/kenya) while the Tanzanian Bird Atlas (http://tanzaniabirdatlas.com) captures sightings in Tanzania.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Mrs Lee Howe for alerting us to this fascinating incident and to Tienie van Vuuren for the photographs and notes on the flamingos during their 'runway stay'. We also thank Brooks Childress, Guy Kirwan and Volker Salewski for commenting on the manuscript and making some useful improvements.

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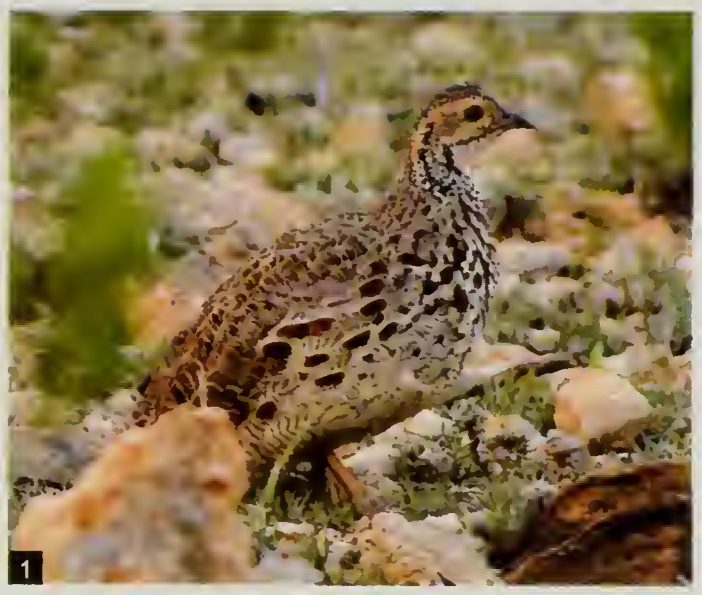
Photospot:
Endemic and special birds of Somaliland

Callan Cohen[a], Michael Mills[a] and Julian Francis[b]

Spécialités du Somaliland. La Corne de l'Afrique est une région très peu visitée par les ornithologues, principalement pour des raisons de sécurité. Cependant, la partie nord-ouest, le Somaliland, qui a son propre gouvernement élu démocratiquement, est un pays stable et paisible, que l'on peut visiter en toute sécurité, contrairement à la Somalie limitrophe. Nous présentons quelques oiseaux parmi les plus remarquables du pays observés au cours de notre visite en mai 2010.

The constant news stories of violence and chaos emanating from Somalia's capital city, Mogadishu, have made 'the Horn of Africa' one of the continent's least-visited regions. Since little other news leaks beyond the region's borders, it is quite understandable that few people realise that the north-western section of the Horn is in fact a peaceful and stable country called the Republic of Somaliland, whose borders roughly equate to the former British Somaliland. An autonomous state with its own government, visas, currency and capital (Hargeisa), Somaliland has just successfully



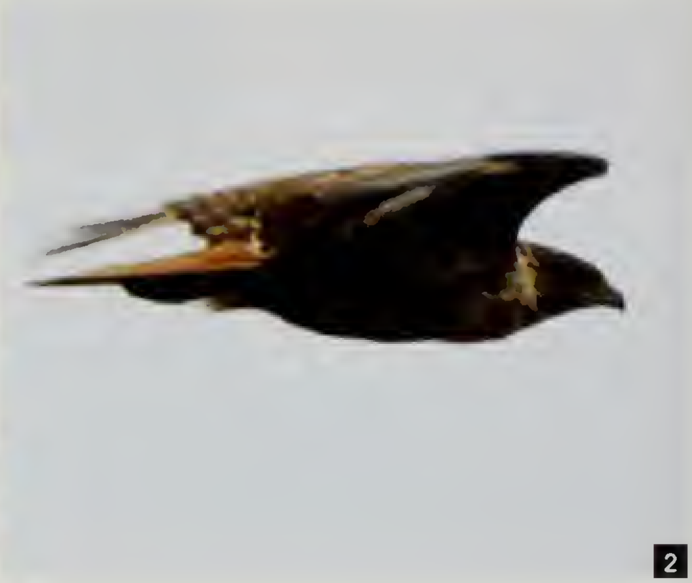


Figure 1. Orange River Francolin *Francolinus levaillantoides* of the subspecies *lorti*, near Daalo Forest, north-east Somaliland, 22 May 2010. This taxon is confined to Somaliland and adjacent north-east Ethiopia (Ash & Atkins 2009). It is, together with *F. l. archeri* of south-west Ethiopia, southern Sudan and northern Uganda, and *F. l. gutturalis* of Eritrea and adjacent northern Ethiopia, often considered to be a separate species, Archer's Francolin *F. archeri*. The vocalisations of Archer's Francolin are similar to those of Orange River Francolin and Shelley's Francolin *S. shelleyi*.

Francolin d'Archer *Francolinus levaillantoides* de la sous-espèce *lorti*, Forêt de Daalo, nord-est du Somaliland, 22 mai 2010. Cette sous-espèce est confinée au Somaliland et au nord-est de l'Éthiopie (Ash & Atkins 2009). Avec *F. l. archeri* de l'Éthiopie du sud-ouest, le Soudan du sud et l'Ouganda du nord, et *F. l. gutturalis* de l'Érythrée et l'Éthiopie du nord, elle est souvent considérée comme une espèce distincte, *F. archeri*.

Figure 2. Archer's Buzzard *Buteo* [*augur*] *archeri*, near Daalo Forest, 22 May 2010. This distinctive taxon is confined to the mountains of northern Somaliland and adjacent Somalia, and differs from adult Augur Buzzard *B. augur* in having rich chestnut underparts and underwing-coverts. Our only sighting was of this subadult. If it is as rare as it appeared during our visit, then this species should be considered for inclusion on the list of globally threatened birds.

Buse d'Archer *Buteo* [*augur*] *archeri*, Forêt de Daalo, 22 mai 2010. Ce taxon distinctif est confinée aux montagnes au nord du Somaliland et de la Somalie limitrophe et diffère de la Buse augure *B. augur* adulte par ses parties inférieures et ses couvertures sous-alaires châtains. Nous n'avons pas d'autre observation que celle de cet individu subadulte.

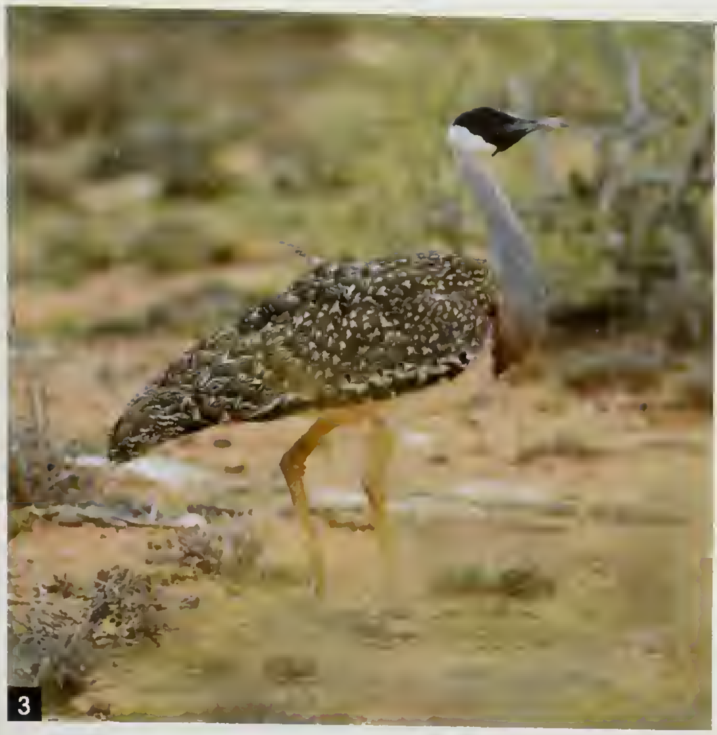


Figure 3. Male Heuglin's Bustard *Neotis heuglinii*, east of Burco, 25 May 2010. This majestic bird, with its bold black face mark outlined with a flash of white, finely vermiculated upperparts, grey neck, chestnut lower breast and white belly, must rate as one of Somaliland's most exciting species. It is confined to Somaliland and Somalia, as well as adjacent areas of Djibouti, eastern Ethiopia and northern Kenya. It appears to occur in greatest numbers in central Somaliland, where we saw several in one day, and where this bird was photographed.

Outarde de Heuglin *Neotis heuglinii*, à l'est de Burco, 25 mai 2010. Ce majestueux mâle est un des oiseaux les plus remarquables du Somaliland. L'espèce est confinée au Somaliland et à la Somalie, ainsi qu'aux zones limitrophes de Djibouti, l'Éthiopie orientale et le Kenya septentrional. Le Somaliland central semble héberger la plus grande population. Nous y avons observé plusieurs individus en un jour, dont celui photographié.

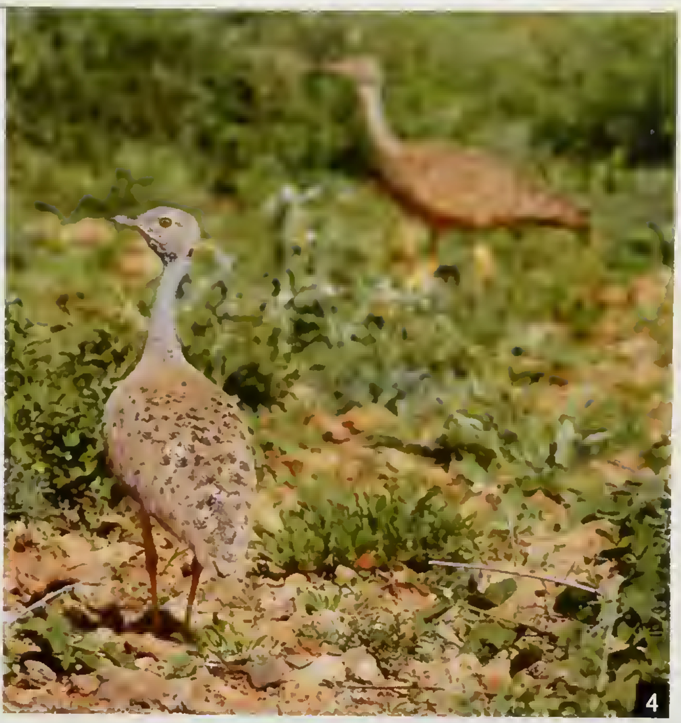


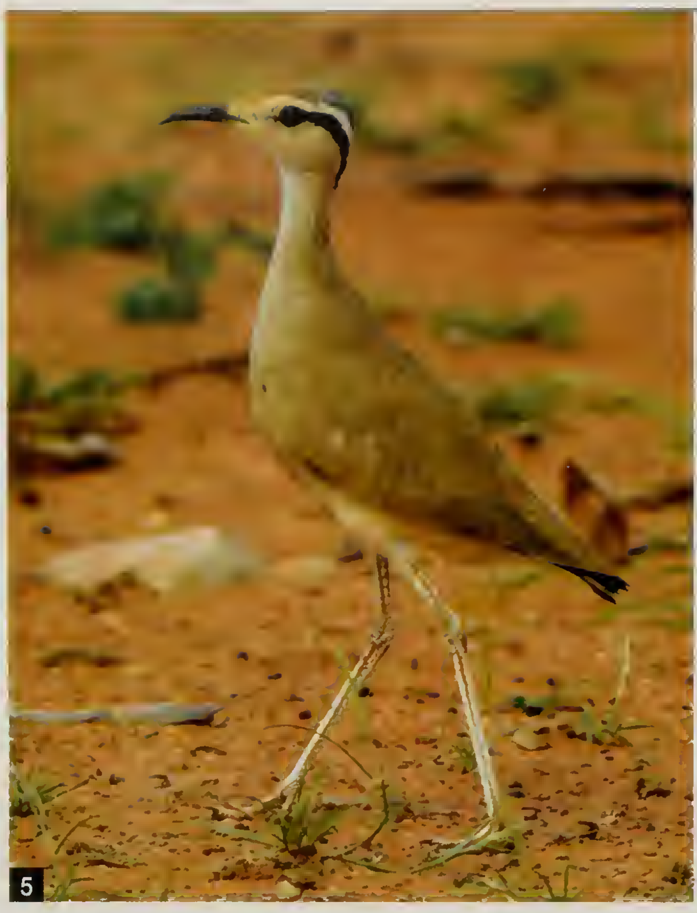
Figure 4. Little Brown Bustard *Eupodotis humilis*, east of Burco, 25 May 2010. This species provides a clear reminder of the ancient, dry-corridor connection between south-west and north-east Africa; it has similar croaking calls to its closest relatives, Karoo Bustard (Korhaan) *E. vigorsii* of western South Africa and southern Namibia, and Rüppell's Bustard (Korhaan) *E. rueppellii* of Namibia and southern Angola. Little Brown Bustard appears to be relatively common and widespread across the plains and bush country of the interior of Somaliland.

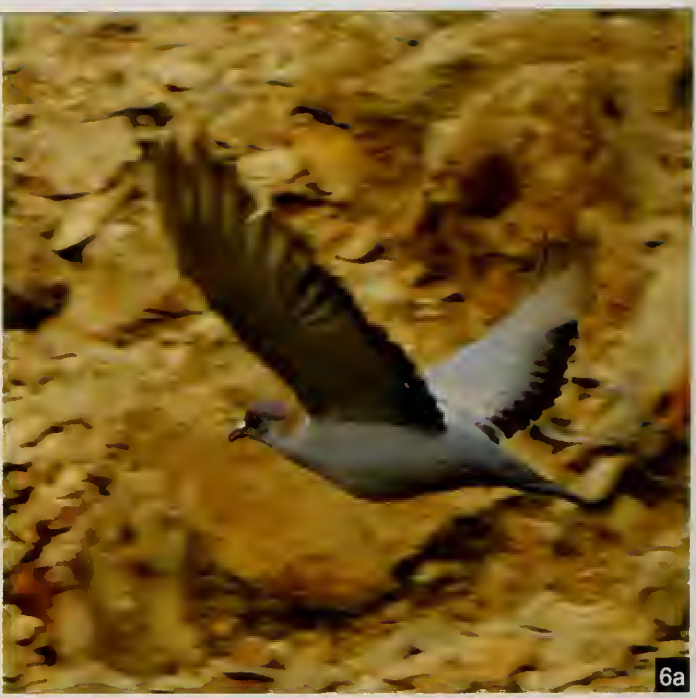
Outarde somalienne *Eupodotis humilis*, à l'est de Burco, 25 mai 2010. Cette espèce rappelle l'existence dans le passé d'un corridor aride reliant le sud-ouest de l'Afrique au nord-est ; elle émet des croassements similaires à ceux de ses congénères les plus proches, l'Outarde de Vigors *E. vigorsii* d'Afrique du Sud occidentale et Namibie du sud, et l'Outarde de Rüppell *E. rueppellii* de Namibie et Angola du sud. L'Outarde somalienne semble être relativement commune et répandue à l'intérieur du Somaliland.

run its second democratic elections, with a new president elected. This news is slowly filtering through to the rest of the world.

From an ornithological perspective, such peace and stability means that a few adventurous groups have now visited this mysterious and remote region over the past year. *Birds of Somalia* by Ash & Miskell (1998) and the excellent new field guide to the *Birds of the Horn of Africa* (Redman *et al.* 2009) have provided significant encouragement. The now difficult to find *The Birds of British Somaliland and the Gulf of Aden* (Archer & Godman 1937, 1961) is a must-read for anyone with a serious interest in the region's birds. It was written principally by Sir Geoffrey Archer, Governor of British Somaliland in 1919–22 (who first went there as a colonial administrator in 1913) and constitutes one of Africa's ornithological classics.

To explore the region and contribute to our outdated knowledge of its birds, Birding Africa (www.birdingafrica.com) organised a two-week expedition to Somaliland during the season of peak rains (May/June), to coincide with the main bird breeding season (Archer & Godman 1961). While a trip during this period has the disadvantage of missing a host of Palearctic migrants that visit the country in September–April, our primary aim was to improve knowledge of the region's resident endemics and near-endemics, particularly of their





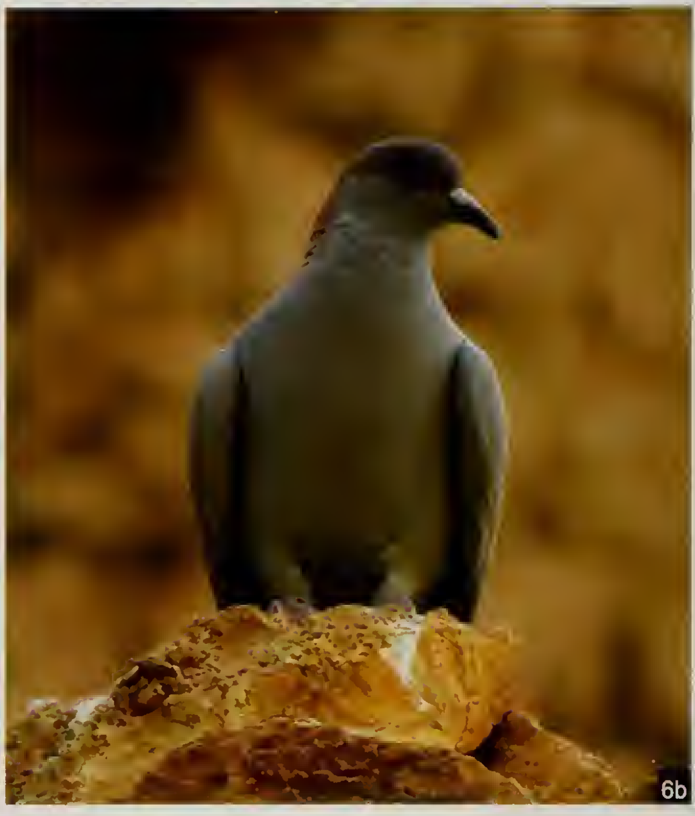
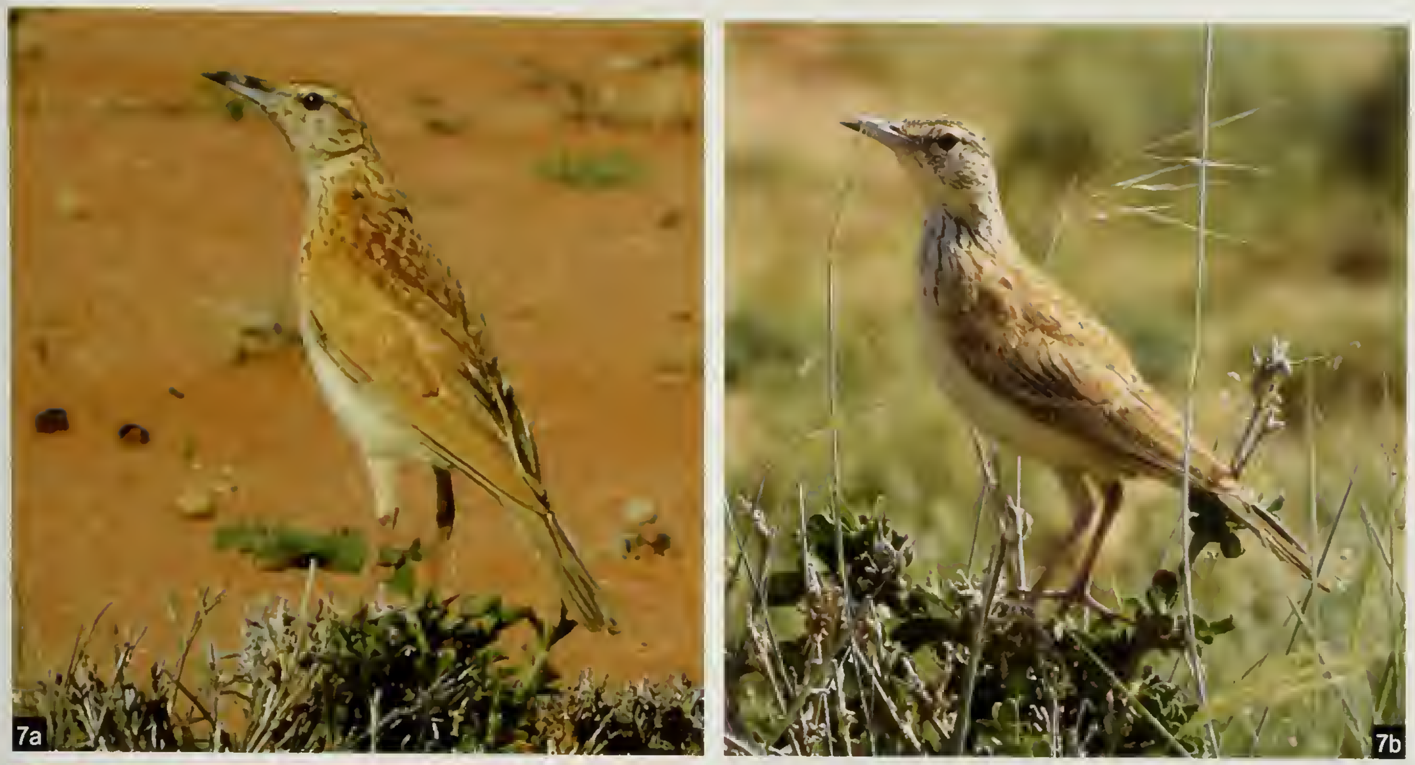


Figure 5. Somali Courser *Cursorius* (*cursor*) *somalensis*, Bohootleh area, 27 May 2010. This 'dapper' courser of arid north-east Africa is common on the plains of Somaliland. It shares its blue-grey nape with the similar Cream-coloured Courser *C. cursor*, which occurs from North Africa to India, and Burchell's Courser *C. rufus* of arid areas of southern Africa. The underwing pattern—distal half black and proximal half brownish grey with a white trailing edge—is similar to that of Burchell's Courser and is perhaps the best feature for differentiating it from the very similar and partially sympatric Cream-coloured Courser, which has an entirely black underwing (Pearson & Ash 1996).

Courvite de Somalie *Cursorius* (*cursor*) *somalensis*, zone de Bohootleh, 27 mai 2010. Ce courvite de l'Afrique du nord-est aride est commun dans les plaines du Somaliland. Il partage sa nuque gris-bleu avec le Courvite isabelle *C. cursor*, dont l'aire de distribution s'étend d'Afrique du Nord jusqu'en Inde, et le Courvite de Burchell *C. rufus* des zones arides d'Afrique australe. Le pattern sous-alaire—main noire et bord de fuite blanc—est probablement le meilleur caractère pour distinguer le Courvite de Somalie du Courvite isabelle, qui est très semblable et partiellement sympatrique, mais dont le dessous de l'aile est entièrement noir (Pearson & Ash 1996).

Figure 6. Somali Pigeon *Columba oliviae*, near Dubâr, 28 May 2010. This localised pigeon with its distinctive pale rufous nape patch, is confined to the arid hills just inland of the Somaliland and northern Somalia coasts. It was first collected by Sir Geoffrey Francis Archer in 1917 and named, by Colonel Stephenson Clarke, for his wife Lady Archer. During the First World War 10,000 camels were sent from British Somaliland to Egypt, necessitating the importation of large quantities of grain to feed these camels. This was when Archer observed Somali Pigeon flocking to feed on this abundant food source at Dubâr near Berbera. We saw a handful of birds that appeared to be breeding in caves, also near Dubâr.

Pigeon de Somalie *Columba oliviae*, près de Dubâr, 28 mai 2010. Ce pigeon, avec sa tache nuchale roussâtre distinctive, est confiné aux collines arides à l'arrière de la zone côtière du Somaliland et du nord de la Somalie. Sir Geoffrey Francis Archer fut le premier à collecter des spécimens, en 1917, et l'espèce a été nommée d'après sa femme, Lady Archer, par le Colonel Stephenson Clarke. Nous avons vu quelques individus, qui nichaient apparemment dans des grottes près de Dubâr.



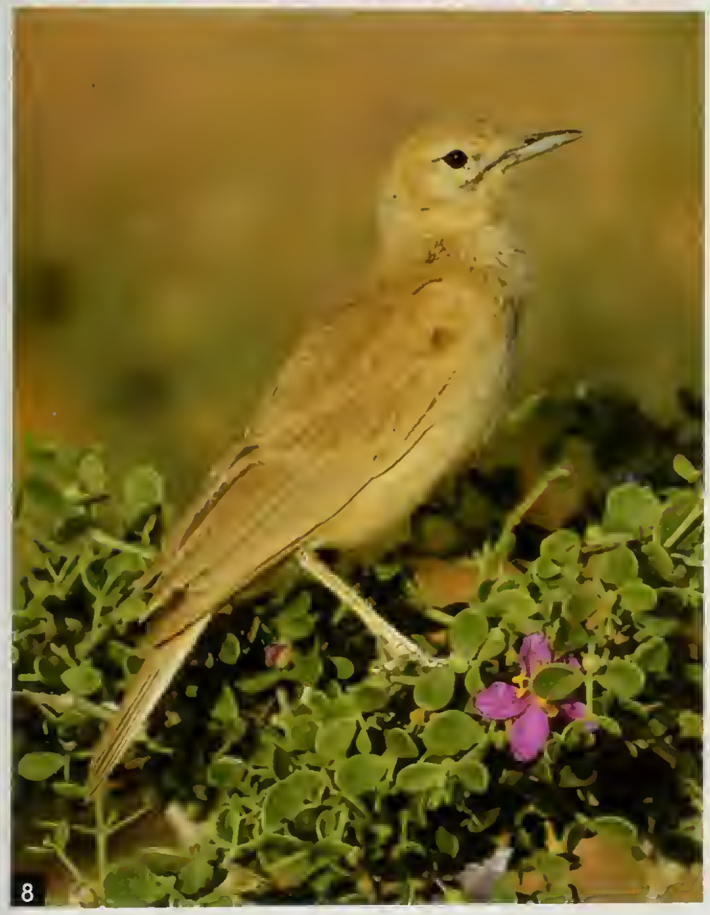
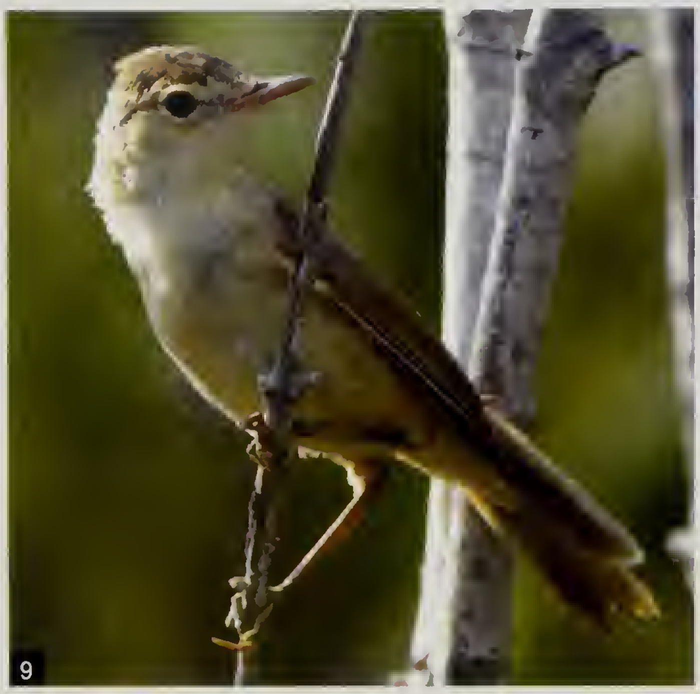


Figure 7. Somali Lark *Mirafra somalica*, Qorladey plains, south of Hargeysa, 28 May 2010. The nominate subspecies of Somali Lark is endemic to Somaliland and Somalia. It is a large, stout, upright lark, with rich rufous upperparts and quite a long, slightly downcurved bill, and runs like a courser across the open plains (Archer & Godman 1961). We found them uncommonly across the open, treeless plains of central Somaliland, where they sang their sweet songs from atop low bushes. We were surprised to find how similar the birds were to Rufous-naped Lark *M. africana*, especially given there has been a suggestion that it may belong in the genus *Certhilauda*, which to us seems strange as it clearly appears to be a species of *Mirafra*.

Alouette de Somalie *Mirafra somalica*, plaine de Qorladey, au sud d'Hargeysa, 28 mai 2010. La sous-espèce nominale de l'Alouette de Somalie est endémique au Somaliland et à la Somalie. Nous l'avons trouvée peu commune dans les plaines ouvertes du Somaliland central, où les oiseaux chantaient sur des buissons. Cette alouette resemble beaucoup à l'Alouette à nuque rousse *M. africana*, et la suggestion qu'elle pourrait appartenir au genre *Certhilauda* nous paraît injustifiée.

Figure 8. Lesser Hoopoe Lark *Alaemon hamertoni*, near Garadag, 22 May 2010. One of the highlights of our expedition was watching the localised Lesser Hoopoe Lark performing its parachute-like display flights over the desert plains of Somaliland. This large, plain-coloured lark is yet another endemic to Somaliland and Somalia. Its resemblance to Greater Hoopoe Lark *A. alaudipes* is rather superficial, and genetic data are required to determine if it is indeed a close relative of the latter species, or if it deserves its own genus.

Sirli de Witherby *Alaemon hamertoni*, près de Garadag, 22 May 2010. Un des points forts de notre expédition était l'observation du Sirli de Witherby faisant son vol nuptial ressemblant à un parachute au-dessus des plaines désertiques du Somaliland. Cette grande alouette terne est endémique au Somaliland et à la Somalie.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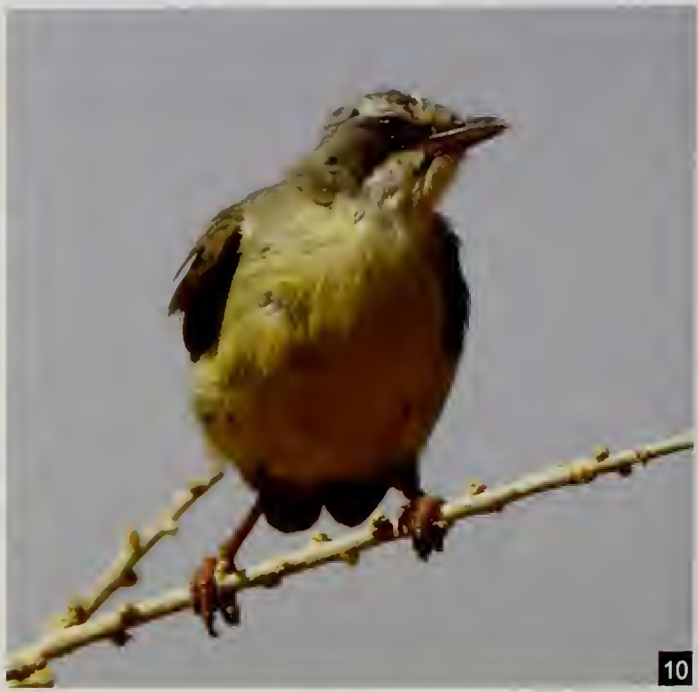
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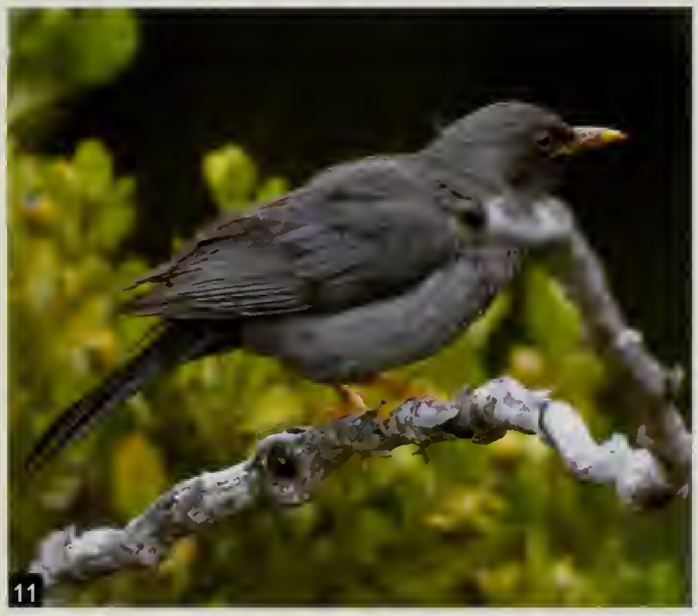
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Figure 9. Mangrove Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus* [*baeticatus*] *avicenniae*, near Saylac, 17 May 2010. This taxon was initially described in 1989 as a subspecies of African Reed Warbler *A. baeticatus* (Ash *et al.* 1989). Based on the findings of Leisler *et al.* (1997), who used genetic, phenotypic and vocal evidence to study relationships between members of the genus *Acrocephalus*, Gill & Donsker (2008) elevated it to full species status, although most authorities still retain the taxon as a subspecies of African Reed Warbler. As its name suggests, the taxon breeds in mangrove swamps along the North African and Arabian peninsular littorals. It appears to be common near Saylac.

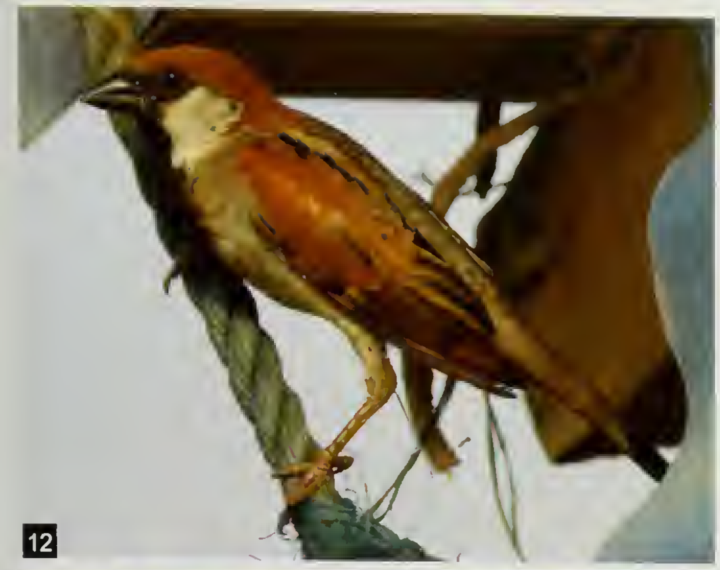
Rousserolle des mangroves *Acrocephalus* [*baeticatus*] *avicenniae*, près de Saylac, 17 mai 2010. Ce taxon niche dans les mangroves du littoral de l'Afrique du Nord et de la péninsule arabe. Il semble être commun près de Saylac.

Figure 10. Philippa's Crombec *Sylvietta philippae*, near Burao, 21 May 2010. This crombec, with its short tail, short, straight bill, yellowish underparts and dark face, is a little-known species of low, dense *Commiphora* and *Acacia* scrub of the Horn of Africa. Prior to 1982 it was known from just 27 records (Ash 1982), although more recently it has been seen occasionally in south-east Ethiopia. Given the paucity of previous records, our five sightings in two days in central and southern Somaliland suggest the species is under-recorded.

Crombec de Somalie *Sylvietta philippae*, près de Burao, 21 mai 2010. Cette petite espèce habite la brousse dense de *Commiphora* et *Acacia* de la Corne de l'Afrique. Avant 1982, il n'y avait que 27 données pour ce crombec (Ash 1982). Nos cinq observations en deux jours au Somaliland central et méridional suggèrent que cette espèce est plus commune qu'on ne le pensait.

Figure 11. Somali Thrush *Turdus ludoviciae*, Daalo Forest, 23 May 2010. This thrush is a member of the Olive Thrush *T. olivaceus* complex, which has recently been the subject of much splitting (Bowie *et al.* 2005). This distinctive species, the only member of the group with no rufous coloration on the underparts, is confined to high-altitude *Juniperus* forests and other scrubby vegetation in the highlands of northern Somaliland.

Merle de Somalie *Turdus ludoviciae*, Forêt de Daalo, 23 mai 2010. Ce merle est un membre du complexe du Merle olivâtre *T. olivaceus*. Cette espèce distinctive, le seul membre du groupe sans roux sur les parties inférieures, est confinée aux forêts de *Juniperus* d'altitude et autres végétations broussailleuses des hautes terres du Somaliland septentrional.



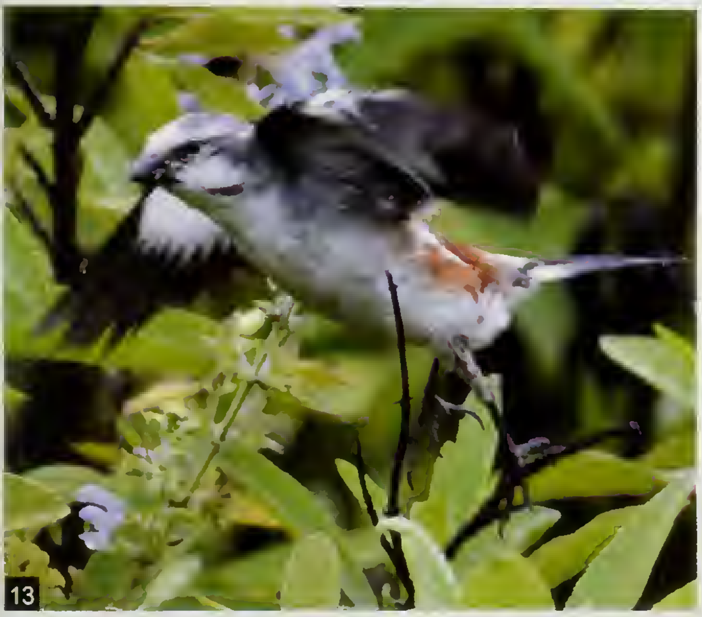


Figure 12. Somali Sparrow *Passer castanopterus*, Saylac, 18 May 2010. This breeding-plumaged male of the nominate subspecies is much less yellow below than *P. c. fulgens* of southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya. The entirely rufous head distinguishes it from the very similar House Sparrow *P. domesticus*, with which it is known to hybridise in Somaliland (Ash & Colston 1981, Ash & Miskell 1998). Both species regularly occur around towns and villages; this individual was photographed at Saylac on the Somaliland coast, and as we observed hybrid individuals further to the west, it is possible that introgression of some characters has occurred near areas where House Sparrow occurs.

Moineau de Somalie *Passer castanopterus*, Saylac, 18 mai 2010. Ce mâle de la sous-espèce nominale en plumage nuptial est moins jaune en dessous que *P. c. fulgens* d'Éthiopie et du Kenya septentrional. La tête entièrement rousse le distingue du Moineau domestique *P. domesticus*, avec lequel il s'hybride au Somaliland (Ash & Miskell 1998). Les deux espèces sont régulièrement rencontrées autour des villes et villages ; cet individu a été photographié à Saylac, sur la côte du Somaliland.

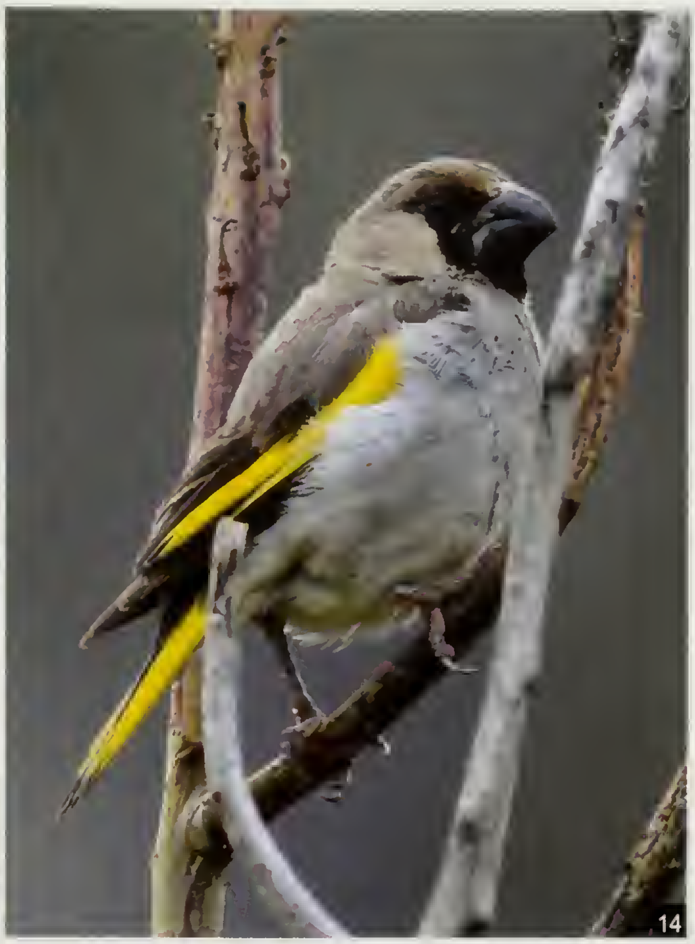


Figure 13. Warsangli Linnet *Carduelis johannis*, Daalo Forest, 23 May 2010. There are greatly varying reports concerning the scarcity of the localised Warsangli Linnet, which appears to be abundant at times and rare at others (Ash & Miskell 1981). This lovely finch, with its chestnut rump and flank patch, and distinctive white wing patches, was numerous during our visit to Daalo Forest, occurring from *Juniperus* forests above 2,000 m to *Acacia* bushveld at 1,270 m.

Linotte de Warsangli *Carduelis johannis*, Forêt de Daalo, 23 mai 2010. Cette jolie espèce semble être parfois abondante, parfois rare (Ash & Miskell 1981). Elle était nombreuse pendant notre visite à la forêt de Daalo, des forêts de *Juniperus* au-dessus de 2.000 m à la zone d'*Acacia* à 1.270 m.

Figure 14. Somali Golden-winged Grosbeak *Rhynchostruthus louisae*, near Daalo Forest, 24 May 2010. This grosbeak forms a superspecies with the similar Socotra Golden-winged Grosbeak *R. socotranus* of Socotra and Arabian Golden-winged Grosbeak *R. percivali* of the Arabian Peninsula. Somaliland birds are best distinguished from their closest relatives by lacking any white on the cheeks (Kirwan & Grieve 2007).

Grand-verdier à ailes d'or de Somalie *Rhynchostruthus louisae*, près de la forêt de Daalo, 24 mai 2010. Ce grand-verdier constitue une super-espèce avec le Grand-verdier à ailes d'or de Socotra *R. socotranus* et le Grand-verdier à ailes d'or d'Arabie *R. percivali*. Les oiseaux du Somaliland se distinguent par l'absence de blanc sur les joues (Kirwan & Grieve 2007).

vocalisations. Although we encountered more rain than we expected in this desert region, and lost several hours getting stuck in sand and mud as a result, most birds were in full song or breeding, including the region's rich array of larks.

Here we showcase some of Somaliland's most sought-after and charismatic birds, and encourage other birdwatchers with a sense of adventure to visit the country and augment our knowledge of its birds and mammals. Several species depicted here are very poorly known, and for some these are the first published photographs. Our visit, that of Hugh Buck, and a subsequent visit by Nik Borrow, have produced many other interesting findings and questions, which will be published in more detail elsewhere. We would also like to encourage travelling birders to recognise Somaliland for what it is: a friendly country where an impressive number of endemic and little-known birds can be found.

Acknowledgements

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Recent Reports

These are largely unconfirmed records published for interest only; **records are mostly from 2010, with a few from earlier dates.** We thank all birders who have sent in their records and urge them to submit full details to the relevant national or regional organisations. It is suggested that observations of each species be compared with relevant literature to set new data in context and that observers who are unfamiliar with the status of birds in a particular country refer to the ABC country checklists (www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/checklists/index.html) or more recent or appropriate sources before submitting records.

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Les observations ci-après sont en majeure partie non confirmées et sont publiées uniquement dans le but d'informer. **La plupart des données sont de 2010 ; quelques-unes sont plus anciennes.** Nous remercions tous les ornithologues qui ont pris la peine de nous faire parvenir leurs données et nous recommandons de les envoyer, dûment documentées, aux organisations nationales ou régionales concernées. Il est conseillé de vérifier le statut des espèces observées dans la littérature appropriée, afin de mettre les nouvelles données en perspective, et de consulter notamment les 'checklists' des pays africains du ABC (www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/checklists/index.html) ou des sources plus récentes ou appropriées.

Angola

A research and conservation trip to Angola in July–August 2010 recorded several **Cinderella Waxbills** *Estrilda thomensis* near Chibemba on 12 July. On 14 July **Swierstra's Francolin** *Francolinus swierstrai* was seen near Lubango, and **Pale Olive Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus fulviventris* near Catengue. A week was spent at Mount Moco (15–22 July) where several **Swierstra's Francolins** were observed. Other new and interesting sightings at this site included **Western Banded Snake Eagle** *Circaetus cinerascens*, **Barn Owl** *Tyto alba*, **Marsh Owl** *Asio capensis*, **Bar-tailed Trogon** *Apaloderma vittatum*, **African Golden Oriole** *Oriolus auratus*, and the first nest (with eggs) of **Margaret's Batis** *Batis margaritae*. En route to Mount Namba **Brazza's Martin** *Phedina brazzae*, **Black-necked Eremomela** *Eremomela atricollis*, **Bocage's Sunbird** *Nectarinia bocagii* and **Bocage's Weaver** *Ploceus temporalis* were seen. Noteworthy species at Mount Namba, which was visited on 24–26 July, included several **Swierstra's Francolins**, as well as **Grey-striped Francolin** *Francolinus griseostriatus*, **Ruwenzori Nightjar** *Caprimulgus ruwenzorii*, several **Bar-tailed Trogons**, **Orange Ground Thrush** *Zoothera gurneyi*, **Laura's Woodland Warbler** *Phylloscopus laurae* and **Red-faced Crimsonwing** *Cryptospiza reichenovii*. On 28 July, **Angola Slaty Flycatcher** *Melaenornis brunneus* was seen at Pungo Andongo, and on 29 July **White-headed Robin Chat** *Cossypha heinrichi* near Calandula. On 31 July–1 August two groups of **Black-tailed Cisticolas** *Cisticola melanurus* were encountered near Cacolo (*MMi, MM, DB & AV*).

In October, an **Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo** *Cercococcyx olivinus* was heard in Kumbira Forest, where at least two pairs of **Trumpeter Hornbills** *Bycanistes bucinator* were observed on 18–20th. Five **Gray's Larks** *Ammomanopsis grayi* were found near Namibe on 22nd (*DH*).

Azores

The following records are from April–November 2010. A raft of >250 **Wilson's Storm-petrels** *Oceanites oceanicus* was seen off Pico on 17 August. The two long-staying **Pied-billed Grebes** *Podilymbus podiceps* on São Miguel (*Bull. ABC* 17: 239) were still present in November. An **American Great Egret** *Egretta alba egretta* was on Pico on 4 November. The **Great Blue Heron** *Ardea herodias* at Paul da Praia, Terceira, from 15 February stayed until at least 13 September; another was seen on Flores on 2 June and 12 October. Two male **Wood Ducks** *Aix sponsa* were present on Flores from 19 October into November. If accepted, a **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* reported on Santa Maria on 25 June will be the first for the Azores. The first breeding record of **Killdeer** *Charadrius vociferus* for the archipelago (and for the Western Palearctic) occurred on Santa Maria, where a pair with two young was photographed on 29 May. Large numbers of Nearctic waders were seen from late July which, until October, included a few **Semipalmated Plovers** *Charadrius semipalmatus*, many **Semipalmated Sandpipers** *Calidris pusilla*, two **Western Sandpipers** *C. mauri* (on Corvo on 3 September and on Terceira on 1 October), a few **Least Sandpipers** *C. minutilla*, many **White-rumped Sandpipers** *C. fuscicollis*, a **Baird's Sandpiper** *C. bairdii*, many **Pectoral Sandpipers** *C. melanotos*, a few **Wilson's Snipes** *Gallinago g. delicata* (of which one was displaying on Terceira on 6 June; Common Snipe *G. gallinago* occurs there as well), a **Short-billed**

Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus* (on Pico on 13 September), two **Upland Sandpipers** *Bartramia longicauda* (on Flores on 4 October), two **Solitary Sandpipers** *Tringa solitaria*, two **Greater Yellowlegs** *T. melanoleuca*, many **Lesser Yellowlegs** *T. flavipes*, and a few **Spotted Sandpipers** *Actitis macularius*.

A first-year **Bonaparte's Gull** *Larus philadelphia* was at Mosteiros, São Miguel, on 5 September. Three **Sooty Terns** *Sterna fuscata* were seen on Ilhéu da Vila, Santa Maria, from 25 June; a pair bred successfully there (the first since 2005 in the Azores) with a fledgling seen on 11 August. A **Bridled Tern** *S. anaethetus* was observed on Ilhéu da Praia, Graciosa, on 8 September. On São Miguel, an **American Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger surinamensis* was identified on 10 October. Five **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** *Coccyzus americanus* were on Corvo and Flores in October–November, whilst a **Black-billed Cuckoo** *C. erythropthalmus* was on Corvo on 24 October. A moribund **Common Nighthawk** *Chordeiles minor* was found on Faial on 13 October. A **Belted Kingfisher** *Megaceryle alcyon* was reported on Pico on 16 September, with another on Terceira from 16 September into November. New for the archipelago were a **Northern Flicker** *Colaptes auratus* on Corvo on 15–28 October and a **Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata* at Fajã Grande, Flores. Also on Flores, **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** *Pheucticus ludovicianus* were noted on 22 April (a male), 19 May (a female) and 20 May (a male).

As in previous years, an impressive number of New World passerines was reported in October–November, including three firsts for the Azores: a **Cedar Waxwing** *Bombycilla cedrorum* on Corvo on 11–19 October (and probably the same on Flores on 23 October); two **Catbirds** *Dumetella carolinensis* on Flores on 7 and 12 October; and a **Lincoln's Sparrow** *Melospiza lincolnii* on Corvo on 12–13 October. Other species reported, mainly in October, included six **Red-eyed Vireos** *Vireo olivaceus*, an **American Cliff Swallow** *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*, a **Hermit Thrush** *Catharus guttatus*, a **Grey-cheeked Thrush** *C. minimus*, eight **Buff-bellied Pipits** *Anthus r. rubescens*, a **Summer Tanager** *Pirangra rubra* (second for the Azores), up to two **Scarlet Tanagers** *P. olivacea*, up to five **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks**, four **Indigo Buntings** *Passerina cyanea*, a **White-crowned Sparrow** *Zonotrichia leucophrys* (third for the Azores), up to seven **Bobolinks** *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*, up to two **Baltimore Orioles** *Icterus galbula*, two **Black-and-white Warblers** *Mniotilta varia*, a **Tennessee Warbler** *Vermivora peregrina* (second for the Azores), a **Northern Parula** *Parula americana*, an **American Yellow Warbler** *Dendroica petechia*, a **Blackpoll Warbler** *D. striata*, two **American Redstarts** *Setophaga ruticilla*, a **Northern Waterthrush** *Seiurus noveboracensis* and a **Common Yellowtroat** *Geothlypis trichas* (per *Birding World* 23: 449; *Dutch Birding* 32: 266–276, 334–338, 419–422).

Benin

In August–November 2010 the following noteworthy records were reported. The major finding of the period was the discovery of several **Anambra Waxbills** *Estrilda poliopareia* near Sèdjè-Dénou (06°43'30"N 02°23'15"E), *c.*35 km north of Cotonou in the Basse Vallée de l'Ouémé on 8 August (*WP*). This species was previously known only from a few localities in southern Nigeria. Three or four individuals were seen again and photographed on 21 August (Fig.1; *WP*) with two on 23 October (*WP, BPo*); floods in southern Benin have limited further investigations.

Highlights from the Cotonou harbour area (*c.*06°21'N 02°25'E) include the following. Two adult **Grey Pratincoles** *Glareola cinerea* were found on the beach on 25 September (*BPo, WP*). An immature **Kittlitz's Plover** *Charadrius pecuarius* on 24 September may be only the second record for southern Benin. The same day, an adult **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* was observed; this would be the first record for the country of this Neartic vagrant, if accepted (*BPo*). A **Little Stint** *Calidris minuta* was seen on 14 and 21 November (*WP*) and a **Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus* on 21–23 November (*WP, BPo*); there are few previous records of either species. Single **Ruddy Turnstones** *Arenaria interpres*, only recently added to the Benin list (*cf. Bull ABC* 17: 215), were seen again on 22 September, 1 and 19 October. On 6 October, a second calendar-year **Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus* was seen chasing Royal Terns *Sterna maxima c.*200–300 m offshore at the mouth of Nokoué Lake; another addition to the country's list. A **Grey-headed Gull** *Larus cirrocephalus* was present on 1 October and a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *L. fuscus* on 19 September and 27 October; both are uncommon in Benin. On 9 September, two adult **Lesser Crested Terns** *Sterna bengalensis* in non-breeding plumage were on the beach within a mixed flock of *c.*145 terns; these appear to be the first for Benin (*BPo*). On 9–17 September, up to 53 **Damara Terns** *S. balaenarum*, most still in breeding plumage, were also present (Fig. 2; *BPo, WP*). Several **Common Terns** *S. hirundo* and a single first-winter **Arctic Tern** *S. paradisaea* were seen on several occasions over the period, while the unusually large number of 369 **Royal Terns** *S. maxima* was present on 6 November. On 16 September, a ship-assisted **Indian House Crow** *Corvus splendens* first found in February 2010 was seen again. A **White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba* was seen in Cotonou on 6 and 10 November (*BPo*).

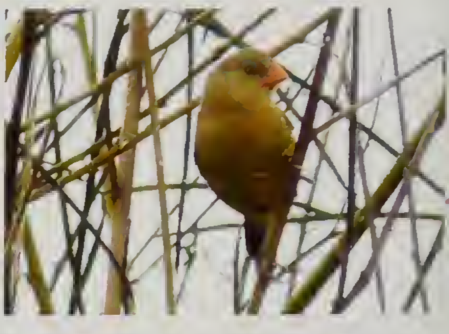

Figure 1. Anambra Waxbill / Astrild du Niger *Estrilda poliopareia*, near Sèdjè-Dénou, Basse Vallée de l'Ouémé, Benin, 21 August 2010 (Wouter Plomp)

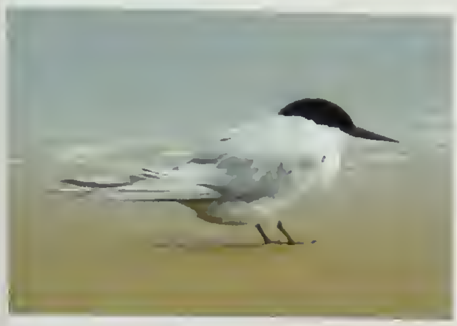

Figure 2. Damara Tern / Sterne des baleiniers *Sterna balaenarum*, Cotonou area, Benin, 11 September 2010 (Bruno Portier)

Records from other sites include the following. A pair of **African Pygmy Geese** *Nettapus auritus* was seen near Sô-Ava, Plaine du Sô, on 28 August. On 10 October, a flock of at least 1,000 (possibly up to 2,000) **Collared Pratincoles** *Glareola pratincola* was observed above Plaine du Sô; they probably congregated due to the floods which affected a major part of the area (*WP*). **Brown Sunbird** *Anthreptes gabonicus*, seldom reported from the country, was regularly seen at Houndodji lagoon near Togbin, *c*.12 km west of Cotonou (*BPo, WP*).

Botswana

In May–November 2010 the following were reported. A **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* was seen at Mashatu, in the Tuli Block, on 6 May and 8 August (*DS, SS*); a group of seven was at Nata Sanctuary on 24–25 August (*CB*) and one at Coombe Farm, on the Limpopo River, on 1 October (*BLB*); most sightings are of singles or pairs, often with young, but seven together is unusual. Notable wildfowl records in south-east Botswana included eight **Fulvous Whistling Ducks** *Dendrocygna bicolor* at Bokaa Dam on 22 July, two **White-backed Ducks** *Thalassornis leuconotus* at Mogobane Dam on 26 September (*CB*), 45 **Maccoa Ducks** *Oxyura maccoa* at Bokaa Dam on 22 July, 13 at Gamoleele Dam and one at Jwaneng Sewage Ponds on 16 July, 18 at Mahalapye Sewage Ponds on 17 August, and seven at Sojwe Pan on 21 August (*CB, PD, MG*). A **Common Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*, a presumed escape, was seen at Gaborone Game Reserve on 30 July and was still present on 21 September (*RB, LS, IW*).

Single **Ospreys** *Pandion haliaetus* were seen at Nata Sanctuary on 8 September and in Moremi Game Reserve near the Khwai River on 13 September (*PN, RSm*). Some 785 **Chestnut-banded Plovers** *Charadrius pallidus*, including a pair with one young of *c*.1 week old, were seen in the north of Sowa Pan, Makgadikgadi system, on 24–25 August; this is the second-highest count at this site (*CB*). A **White-headed Lapwing** *Vanellus albiceps* was reported from Stevensford Game Ranch on the banks of the Limpopo River, *c*.13 km east of Martinsdrift Border Post, in early October; this appears to be one of the westernmost records in this part of the species' range (per *TH*). A **Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*, a **Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata* and a **Whimbrel** *N. phaeopus* were on the Nata River near Sowa Pan on 25 August (*CB*); a Eurasian Curlew was also present on 8 September (*PN, RSm*). A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* was located at Phakalane Sewage Ponds, Gaborone, on 17 October (per *TH*). In Nata Sanctuary, 29 **Caspian Terns** *Sterna caspia* were observed on 25 August (*CB*).

Sightings of **Schalow's Tauraco** *Tauraco schalowi* in the Kasane area were reported from Mowana Lodge on 23 September (*PN, RSm*) and Marina Lodge on 29 November (*PL*). A **Thick-billed Cuckoo** *Pachycoccyx audeberti* was seen on 3 September at Shakawe, in the Okavango Panhandle (*CL*); this is the 13th record for Botswana. A **Bushveld Pipit** *Anthus caffer* and a **Long-billed Pipit** *A. similis* were identified in the Lokgokgotho Hills south of Gaborone on 31 October (*CB*).

Burkina Faso

Two **Common Waxbills** *Estrilda astrild* were observed at close range (and the black undertail-coverts noted) at the base of the Niansogoni Escarpment, west of Sindou, *c*.5 km from the border with Mali and 15 km from Côte d'Ivoire, on 13 August 2010; this appears to be the first record for the country (*MF*).

Canary Islands

Records from June–November 2010 include the following. The first **Cape Verde Shearwater** *Calonectris edwardsii* for the Canaries was trapped in a Cory's Shearwater *C. diomedea borealis* colony at Montaña Clara, Chinijo, Lanzarote, on 6 June. On 9 July, 43 **Bulwer's Petrels** *Bulweria bulwerii* were observed from the La Gomera to Tenerife ferry. An exceptional 21 **White-faced Storm-petrels** *Pelagodroma marina* were seen from the Lanzarote to Gran Canaria ferry on 7 July. An adult **tropicbird** *Phaethon* flew past the same ferry on 14 July. Two adult **Black Storks** *Ciconia nigra* flew over San Bartolomé de Titajana, Gran Canaria, on 16 October, with an immature also there on 23rd. Also on Gran Canaria in October was an **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* at Maspalomas pond on 16–24th, with two others at La Majadilla on 21st–24th, whilst on Lanzarote, single **American Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis dominica* were observed at Saladar de la Santa and at Tias golf course on 13th–21st. A male **Seebohm's Wheatear** *Oenanthe o. seebohmi* photographed at Castillo del Romeral, Gran Canaria, on 19 June was the first for the archipelago (per *Birding World* 23: 294, 449–451; *Dutch Birding* 32: 266–276). Other firsts were an **Isabelline Wheatear** *O. isabellina* on the El Rubicón plains, Lanzarote, from 26 November into December (Fig. 3; per *Surfbirds.com*) and a **Bobolink**

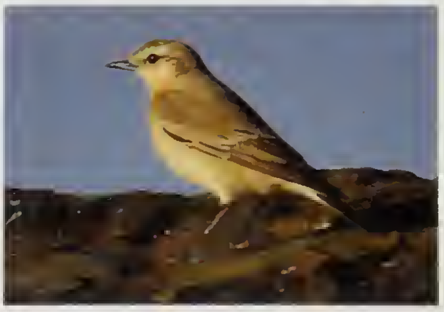

Figure 3. Isabelline Wheatear / Traquet isabelle *Oenanthe isabellina*, El Rubicón plains, Lanzarote, Canary Islands, 26 November 2010 (Francisco Javier García Vargas)

Dolichonyx oryzivorus at Tias golf course, Lanzarote, on 21–23 October (per *Birding World* 23: 449; *Dutch Birding* 32: 422).

Cape Verde Islands

Several **Red-footed Boobies** *Sula sula* were reported in Cape Verdean waters: two immatures south of the archipelago on 27 April 2010, two immatures while at anchor off Fogo on 28 April and another immature at sea off the same island on the same day. Hazevoet (*Zool. Caboverdiana* 1: 3–44, 2010) mentions only five previous records for the islands (*SC*, per *Sea Swallow* 59: 18).

Chad

A not so recent, but nevertheless noteworthy record is that of a **House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus* photographed near Am-Timan, a small town *c*.60 km east of Zakouma National Park, in the south-east (*c*.11°02'N 20°17'E) on 6 April 2004; this appears to be a new locality for the species (*DC* per *BPo*; Fig. 4).

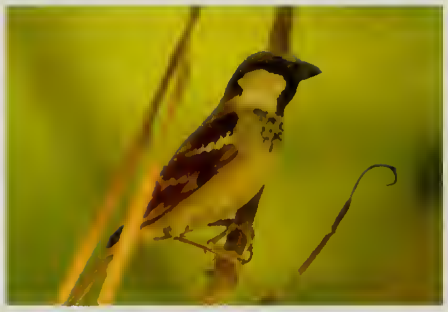

Figure 4. House Sparrow / Moineau domestique *Passer domesticus*, near Am-Timan, Chad, 6 April 2004 (Daniel Cornélis)

Djibouti

Some seedeaters *Serinus* photographed near Day village, on 1 June 2010, have raised interesting questions. Although they were initially identified as **Yellow-throated Seedeaters** *S. flavigula*, they appear to have noticeably less yellow on the throat than the Yellow-throated Seedeaters in Ethiopia and some seem not to have any yellow at all, thus being similar to (and possibly being) **White-throated Seedeaters** *S. xanthopygius*. More research is clearly needed to establish the identity of these birds. At the same site, **Bonelli's Eagle** *Hieraaetus fasciatus*, **Djibouti Francolin** *Francolinus ochropectus* and **Gambaga Flycatcher** *Muscicapa gambagae* (Fig. 5) were observed; all these species were also present on 23–24 September. At least one **Sombre Rock Chat** *Cercomela dubia* was photographed there on 25th; this appears to be the first record for the country. The yellow-tailed form of **Green-winged Pytilia** *Pytilia melba* was found near Dittilou on 2 June. Several **Arabian Golden Sparrows** *Passer euchlorus* were seen near Djibouti City on 4 June and at least 20 were there on 5 September, with smaller numbers the following day; this is a well-known haunt of this localised bird. Four **Black Herons** *Egretta ardesiaca* were seen in Djibouti City on 5 September (June records: *MMi, CC, CCo, JF, GMi*; September records: *NB*).

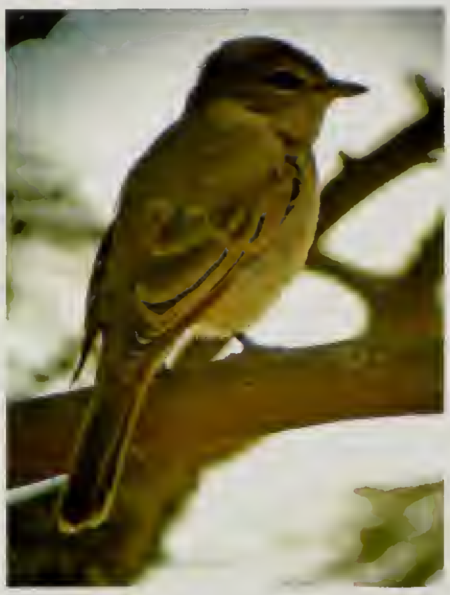

Figure 5. Gambaga Flycatcher / Gobemouche de Gambaga *Muscicapa gambagae*, Forêt du Day, Djibouti, 23 September 2010 (Nik Borrow)

Egypt

Noteworthy records from March–April 2010 not mentioned in previous Recent Reports include the following. A **Great Bittern** *Botauris stellaris* was at Abu Simbel on 5 April. A group of 46 **Black Storks** *Ciconia nigra* was roosting in the desert north of Hurghada on 26 April. At El Gouna golf course, two **Black-winged Pratincoles** *Glareola nordmanni* and a **Caspian Plover** *Charadrius asiaticus* were observed on 4 April. Another Black-winged Pratincole was found at Abassa on 17 April. A **Savi's Warbler** *Locustella luscinioides* was at Sharm el Sheikh sewage works on 12 April and a male **Rüppell's Warbler** *Sylvia rueppelli* near Feiran oasis on 9 March. At Gebel Alba, a **Rosy-patched Bushshrike** *Rhodophoneus cruentus* was found in Wadi Adeib in April, with a pair in Wadi Akwamatra. Eleven **Sinai Rosefinches** *Carpodacus synoicus* were at St. Katherine monastery, Sinai, on 12 March, with a **House Bunting** *Emberiza striolata* also there on 15 April. A **Corn Bunting** *Emberiza calandra* was at Naama Bay on 10 March (per *Sandgrouse* 32: 177).

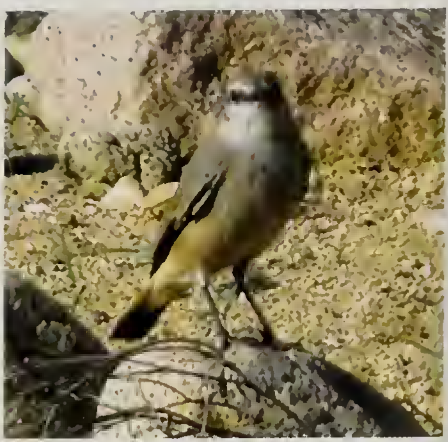

Figure 6. 'Persian' Wheatear / Traquet kurde *Oenanthe* (*xanthoprymna*) *chrysopygia*, Gebel Elba, south-east Egypt, December 2010 (Sherif Baha El Din)

In June–December 2010 the following were reported. During a trip to Gebel Elba from 29 November to 1 December 2010, several **Hume's Owls** *Strix butleri* were heard and seven wheatear taxa were recorded, including tens of **Red-tailed Wheatears** *Oenanthe xanthoprymna*, one of the commonest birds at this site in winter, and a male **'Persian' Wheatear** *O. xanthoprymna chrysopygia*, the second for Egypt (Fig. 6; the first also being from Gebel Elba). There were five species of *Sylvia* warblers, including at least two **Cyprus Warblers** *S. melanothorax* and three **Ménétriés's Warblers** *S. mystacea*. Local fishermen confirmed the long-suspected breeding of **Crab-plover**

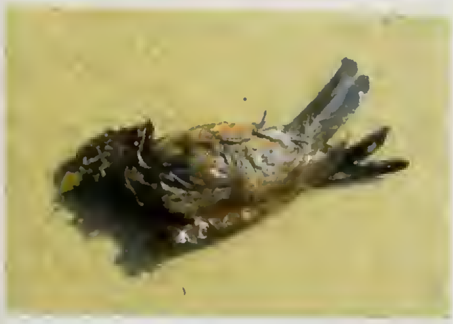

Figure 7. Broad-billed Roller / Rolle violet *Eurystomus glaucurus*, Adal Deib, 30 October 2010 (Ahmed Badry Sayed)

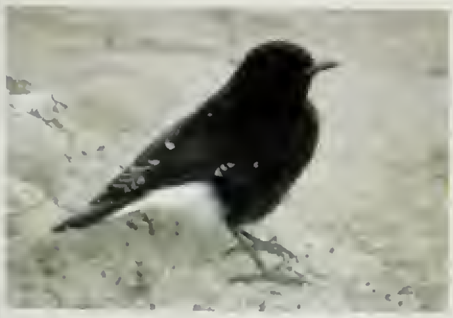

Figure 8. Basalt morph Mourning Wheatear / Traquet deuil *Oenanthe lugens*, Shalatein, Egypt, 2 December 2010 (Sherif Baha El Din)

Dromas ardeola on small sandy islets off Marsa Shaab, south of Shalatein, describing the nests and breeding behaviour in a colony found during summer 2010. A dead roller, photographed on the coast at Adal Deib, was subsequently identified as the first **Broad-billed Roller** *Eurystomus glaucurus* for Egypt (Fig. 7). A **Hypocolius** *Hypocolius ampelinus* was observed on the coastal plain on 1 December. A **Mourning Wheatear** *Oenanthe lugens* of the so-called Basalt morph, photographed (Fig. 8) at Shalatein on 2 December, represents the first record for Egypt and possibly for Africa (*SB, AB*).

A **Cinereous Vulture** *Aegypius monachus* was photographed at Shalatein on 15 November and a **Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* at El Gouna on 9 October. Also at El Gouna, at least six different **Namaqua Doves** *Oena capensis* were photographed between 29 September and 9 October (per *Dutch Birding* 32: 409–415). The first **Yellow-throated Petronia** *Gymnoris xanthocollis* for Egypt was photographed at Marsa Alam on 6 June (per *Dutch Birding* 32: 276).

The Gambia

A juvenile **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* was photographed in Tanji Nature Reserve on 25 November 2010 (Fig. 9; per *VA*); this appears to be the fifth record for the country, the fourth having been reported in January 2008 (*Bull. ABC* 15: 267). The bird was ringed in central Hungary and seems to be the first ringed Red-footed Falcon to be observed in Africa. On 13 October, a **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* was photographed at Marakissa, Western River Division (per *Dutch Birding* 32: 414). In December, a **Little Green Woodpecker** *Campethera maculosa* was photographed at Tendaba, Lower River Division, on 5th, whilst a **Crimson Seedcracker** *Pyrenestes sanguineus*, a rare resident, was observed along the Gambia River, west of Georgetown Island, Central River Division, on 4th (Fig. 10; *VA*).

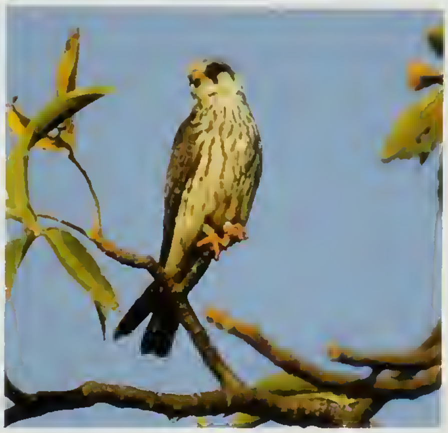

Figure 9. Juvenile Red-footed Falcon / Faucon kobez *Falco vespertinus*, Tanji Nature Reserve, The Gambia, 25 November 2010 (Steve Phillips)

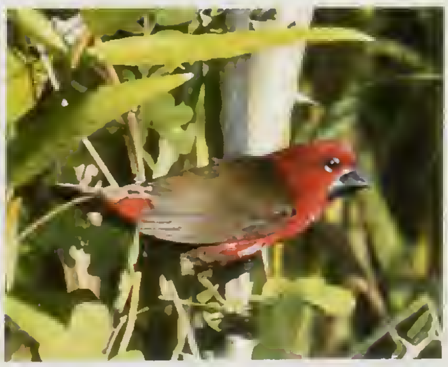

Figure 10. Crimson Seedcracker / Pyréneste gros-bec *Pyrenestes sanguineus*, west of Georgetown Island, Central River Division, The Gambia, 4 December 2010 (Vaughan Ashby)

Ghana

During eight months of field work (mid November 2009–early May 2010, mid August–early November 2010), coverage of the country for the Atlas was completed, and over two-thirds of the squares revisited during the wet seasons. Six species were found for the first time in Ghana: **Black-rumped Buttonquail** *Turnix hottentottus* was heard (and tape-recorded) in mature rice fields in several floodplains of the north (October), from Dalun (north-west of Tamale) east to Wenchiki; **Streaky-breasted Flufftail** *Sarothrura boehmi* was heard in dense, muddy *Hyparrhenia* grassland near Walewale (15 September); a **Marsh Owl** *Asio capensis* was observed in the Amansuri wetlands at Beyin in the extreme south-west (August) and in the Volta floodplain near Yeji; a population of **Rufous Scrub Robins** *Erythropygia galactotes* was found in thicket-clump savanna near Sapeliga (Bawku) in late April (almost certainly the African race, given the late date and the numbers involved), a habitat which also held the first **Green-winged Pytilias** *Pytilia melba* and **Golden-breasted Buntings** *Emberiza flaviventris* for the country.

Among resident species, the known range of many was extended: **White-bellied Bustard** *Eupodotis senegalensis* was locally common in dry woodland in six new squares (nine in all), south to Pong Tamale and Gurugu (09°35'N); **Black-headed Lapwing** *Vanellus tectus* was found in eight new squares (11 in all) south to 09°45'N; the range of **Swamp Nightjar** *Caprimulgus natalensis* was extended west to the Amansuri wetlands; **Horus Swift** *Apus horus* (previously known only from Mole) was encountered at three new localities in the north-west, including on the Kulpawn River; and **Black-headed Weaver** *Ploceus melanocephalus* has been noted in riparian situations in 26 squares in the north, from the Black Volta east to the Oti River.

In the forest zone new records of interest include **Black-collared Lovebird** *Agapornis swindernianus* (a group of *c*.15) and **Grey Ground**

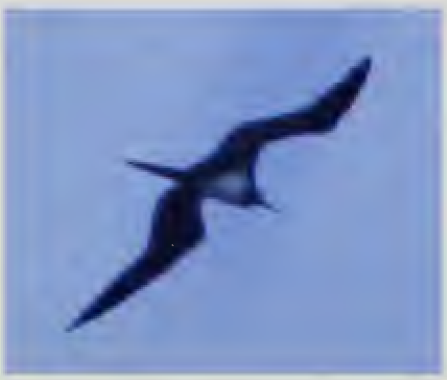

Figure 11. Pale-morph female Ascension Frigatebird / Frégate aigle-de-mer *Fregata aquila*, east of the Ankobra River mouth, Ghana, 26 August 2010 (Marco Fioratti)

Thrush *Zoothera princei* (one heard and glimpsed, calling at close range) at Atewa in August; **Yellow-footed Honeyguide** *Melignomon eisentrauti* seen as far north as 07°06'N in Mpameso Forest (Dormaa); high densities of **Forest Scrub Robin** *Erythropygia leucosticta*, **Puvel's Illadopsis** *Illadopsis puveli* and **Rufous-winged Illadopsis** *I. rufescens* (side by side in separate territories) in the semi-evergreen forests of the Afram headwaters and Opro River, Ofinso District, where a **Bates's Sunbird** *Cinnyris batesi* was also mist-netted. A **Hartlaub's Duck** *Pteronetta hartlaubi* disappearing into a hole halfway up the trunk of a dead tree in a swamp at Ankasa on 20 August was presumably breeding there.

Among Palearctic species, dated records of arrivals include the first **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* on 14 September (Navrongo), **Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* on 5 September (near Salaga), **Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus* on 11 September (Navrongo), **European Bee-eaters** *Merops apiaster* on 11 September (Navrongo), **Common Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos* on 21 October (eastern Ghana), **Great Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* on 28 September (Dabo, Black Volta), **Eurasian Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* on 7 October (Nabogo), **Sedge Warblers** *A. schoenobaenus* and **Willow Warblers** *Phylloscopus trochilus* on 10 October (Yapei, White Volta), **Melodious Warbler** *Hippolais polyglotta* on 29 September (Lawra) and **Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca* on 5 October (Buipe). Singles and groups of 15–17 **Red-footed Falcons** *Falco vespertinus* flew north across western Ghana between 27 March and 5 April. The rare **Common Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis* was found (a male) in pebbly grassland at Likpe Todome (on the Togo border) on 25 February.

Among intra-African migrants, **Grasshopper Buzzards** *Butastur rufipennis* were common in the north until early May, and the first returned on 16 October (Wenchiki). Two individuals of the rare **Swallow-tailed Kite** *Chelictinia riocourii* were seen near Wenchiki on 29 January. **Four-banded Sandgrouse** *Pterocles quadricinctus* left the northern woodlands en masse on 26–28 April, but some may be resident in short grass in the far north (common in September at Sapeliga). **Jacobin Cuckoo** *Clamator jacobinus* was found 'wintering' in several dry semi-evergreen forests of the west (in the Sunyani-Dormaa-Wenchi area), with passage through the woodlands of the north commencing in the second half of April. **White-throated Bee-eaters** *Merops albicollis* started crossing the northern savannas northbound on 30 April and the first return (south) was noted on 29 October (Kalakpa). Several **African Pittas** *Pitta angolensis* were displaying within impenetrable thickets in three localities of dry semi-evergreen forest in the west (from the Afram headwaters to Tain tributaries) with the first heavy rains in March; unfortunately all of these forests are being destroyed rapidly to be replaced by teak plantations. Pittas were also reported displaying in thick forest in Kalakpa in the rains (*FD-L, RJD*).

A frigatebird soared for several minutes over the beach *c.*1 km east of the Ankobra River mouth on 26 August 2010, before heading towards the open sea. A photograph shows the white of the breast and belly extending onto the axillaries, which suggests the bird was a pale-morph female **Ascension Frigatebird** *Fregata aquila* (Fig. 11). This is the first record of a frigatebird for Ghana (*MF*).

Guinea

Now that the vocalisations of the skulking and previously Data Deficient **Baumann's Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus baumanni* are known to a few active observers, the species is being found at an increasing number of sites. In October 2010, four individuals were found at two new sites in the Sangarédi area, in north-western Guinea (*MBC*).

Kenya

The following reports are mainly from June–December 2010, with a few from earlier dates. Two female **Great Crested Grebes** *Podiceps cristatus*, both seen with two young at Olbainita Swamp, Mogotio, on 2 October are encouraging breeding records. A **Red-footed Booby** *Sula sula* found dead on the beach at Watamu on 22 April is the first report of this species for several years. Single **Madagascar Pond Herons** *Ardeola idae* were observed at Olbainita Swamp, Mogotio, on 5 September, and in Nairobi National Park (=NP) on 19 October. A **Marabou Stork** *Leptoptilos crumeniferus* at a small wetland in Arabuko-Sokoke Forest on 30 November is the first record for the area for at least 15 years.

An **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* at Lake Turkana on 15 August was either a very early returning bird or one that had over-summered. A **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* was at Olbainita Swamp, Mogotio, on 2 October, with another over central Nairobi on 13 October. 'Good numbers' of **Egyptian Vultures** *Neophron percnopterus* were reported from around the Rendille homesteads, adjacent to the Chalbi Desert, on 15 August. An immature male **Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus* was observed on the unusual date of 20 June along the Namanga–Amboseli road. An adult male **Levant Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter brevipes* was at Baringo, on 25 November, whilst **Ovampo Sparrowhawks** *A. ovampensis* were observed at Kichwa, Masai Mara, on 29 June and 11

November. At Ngulia, Tsavo West NP, four **Eurasian Sparrowhawks** *A. nisus* were recorded: one on 18 November, two together on 8 December and a single moving south on 10 December; in Kenya, this rare *Accipiter* has been recorded most frequently from around Ngulia in recent years. A pair of **Fox Kestrels** *Falco alopex* was along the eastern edge of the Chalbi Desert on 15 August. A flock of *c*.2,500 **Amur Falcons** *F. amurensis* were foraging on emerging termites west of the Chyulu Hills on 19 November. An **Eleonora's Falcon** *F. eleonorae* at Rhino Ridge, Masai Mara, on 26 September is an early record; three were among the large flock of Amur Falcons on 19 November.

A flock of eight **Crested Guineafowls** *Guttera pucherani* at Sabaringo, Masai Mara, on 27 November is the first record at this site for *c*.20 years. A **Red-chested Flufftail** *Sarothrura rufa* was observed in a swamp at Entasekera, southern Loita Hills, on 22 October, and an **African Water Rail** *Rallus caerulescens* in Amboseli NP on 20 June. A **Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla* was at Olbainita Swamp, near Mogotio, on 5 September, with two there on 2 October, whilst an immature **Spotted Crake** *P. porzana* was photographed on Manguo Ponds, Limuru, the year before, on 24 October 2009. At Talek, Masai Mara, >10 **Common Buttonquails** *Tunix sylvaticus* were reported in May–June; three were ringed at Ngulia in December.

Eight **Black-winged Pratincoles** *Glareola nordmanni* were feeding over Olbainita Swamp, Mogotio, on 7 November; this is a rare and little-recorded Palearctic migrant. A flock of >3,000 **Madagascar Pratincoles** *G. ocularis* was at Didawarede, Tana River Delta, in early August; this suggests the delta could be the most important site for this species, whose world population is estimated at 5,000–10,000. Sadly, the area is destined for sugarcane plantations unless sufficient resistance is mustered to stop the plans (see www.tanariverdelta.org). A group of 150 **Caspian Plovers** *Charadrius asiaticus* on the Solio Plains, Laikipia, on 23 November, is an unusual location for the species, especially in such large numbers. Eight **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa* were in the Tana River Delta in early August; this species is uncommon on the coast. A **Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* was observed at Mountain Lodge, Mount Kenya, on 21 June.

Single **Lemon Doves** *Aplopelia* (*Columba*) *larvata* were noted at Loresho, Nairobi, on 20 August, and Karen on 11–12 September, with two in Nairobi NP on 19 October; whilst resident in low numbers, it is infrequently seen around Nairobi and the Nairobi NP record is the first for the park. A **White-crested Turaco** *Tauraco leucolophus*, observed on the eastern side of the Tugen Hills, on 8 November, is the first recent record from this area. In Nairobi NP, a **Black Coucal** *Centropus grillii* in non-breeding plumage was seen on 5–14 November; there are only 2–3 records of this species in the Nairobi area. A **Pel's Fishing Owl** *Scotopelia peli* in the Tana River Delta on 6 April is a good record for a site that is seriously threatened with destruction in the name of 'eco-friendly' biofuels.

A **Swamp Nightjar** *Caprimulgus natalensis* in the Masai Mara, from mid August into September, suggests an eastern range extension. Also in the Masai Mara, **Square-tailed Nightjars** *C. fossii* were seen at Naibor Camp on 19 June and on Siana Springs airstrip on 29 June; this species is rarely reported but may be commoner than assumed, particularly in the south of the country. Other nightjar records include a **Star-spotted Nightjar** *C. stellatus* and a **Nubian Nightjar** *C. nubicus* near Marigat, Baringo, on 25 November, and a male **Pennant-winged Nightjar** *Macrodipteryx vexillarius* at Rekero Camp, Masai Mara, on 31 August.

A **Eurasian Hoopoe** *Upupa epops* was seen in Amboseli on 20 November. A **Jackson's Hornbill** *Tockus jacksoni* at Kampiya Moto, on the Nakuru–Baringo road, on 4 September, was at the southernmost tip of its range in the Rift Valley. Also in the Rift Valley, a **Grey-throated Barbet** *Gymnobucco bonapartei* in the Tugen Hills on 18 August is an unusually eastern record. An **Eastern** (Green-backed) **Honeybird** *Prodotiscus zambesiae* was heard at Entasekera, southern Loita Hills, on 22–23 October; this species has not been previously recorded in south-west Kenya. In the Masai Mara, an immature **Wahlberg's** (Brown-backed) **Honeybird** *P. regulus* was observed at Naibor Camp on 18 October (there are old records from the Serengeti of this species, which is clearly uncommon in this part of the country) and **Pallid Honeyguides** *Indicator meliphilus* at Kichwa Tembo on 28 June and at Naibor Camp on 1 August (there are very few records from this site). The second **Eurasian Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla* for Nairobi NP was reported on 14 November.

Three **Friedmann's Larks** *Mirafra pulpa* were seen near Chyulu Gate, Tsavo West NP, on 19 November. At Entasekera, southern Loita Hills, **Eastern Mountain Greenbuls** *Andropadus nigriceps* of the nominate race were observed on 22–23 October. A record of **Rüppell's Robin Chat** *Cossypha semirufa* near Loitokitok Road, Amboseli, on 19 June is at a very low altitude for this highland species. In the Masai Mara, **Brown-backed Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas hartlaubi* at Kichwa Tembo on 28 November at least is a new species for the area. An immature male **Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* was ringed at Ngulia, Tsavo West NP, on 29 November. **African Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus baeticatus*, a surprisingly infrequently reported species in Kenya, was found in Amboseli NP on 20 June. A **Common Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita* ringed at Ngulia, Tsavo West NP, on 3 December is only the third recorded (and the second ringed) there in 40 years. A **Gambaga Flycatcher** *Muscicapa gambagae* was seen at Ol Tukai lodge, Amboseli, on 20 June, whilst an immature was ringed at Ngulia on 1 December; little is known about this flycatcher's movements and its status in the country.

Eastern Double-collared Sunbird *Cinnyris mediocris* was reported from Entasekera, southern Loita Hills, on 22–23 October; this seems to be the first from the area. A **Black-headed Gonolek** *Laniarius erythrogaster* at Kichwa Tembo, Masai Mara, on 19 June and 1 July was a surprise at this location; it was apparently seen carrying nesting material earlier in June. Six **Retz's Helmetshrikes** *Prionops retzii* at Hunter's Lodge, Simba, on 17 June is an unusual record for this species, as much of the forest and riverine habitat in Ukambani has been severely degraded. Three pairs of **Red-headed Weavers** *Anaplectes rubriceps* were nest-building in the Changoto woodlands near Dakatcha, Adu, on 18 November; this is a substantial range extension. A **Black-billed Weaver** *Ploceus melanogaster* observed in the Tugen Hills, Rift Valley, on 18 August belongs to a small, isolated population of this uncommon forest weaver. Two **Weyns's Weavers** *P. weynsi* were photographed at Sio Port Swamp, Lake Victoria, on 25 October (Fig. 12); this would be an addition to the Kenyan avifauna, if accepted (*CJ*).

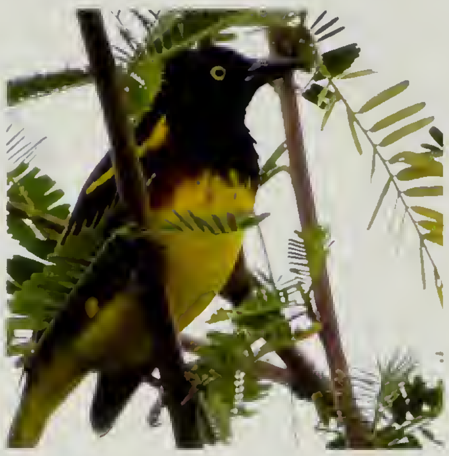

Figure 12. Weyns's Weaver / Tisserin de Weyns *Ploceus weynsi*, Sio Port Swamp, Lake Victoria, Kenya, 25 October 2010 (Martin Odino)

Lesotho

A small group of **Karoo Scrub Robins** *Cercotrichas coryphaeus* was located near Black Mountain above Sani Pass on 2 August; this is well outside the known range of the species (per *TH*).

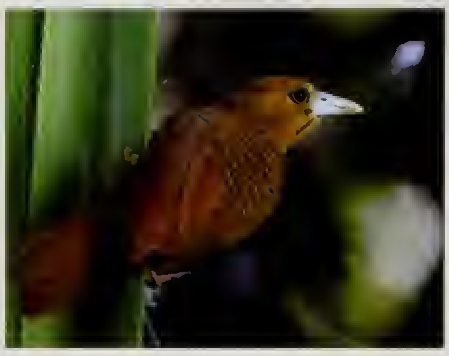

Figure 13. Female Bernier's Vanga / Oriolie de Bernier *Oriolia bernieri*, Périnet Special Reserve, Madagascar, October 2010 (Glen Valentine)

Madagascar

In early October 2010, a female **Bernier's Vanga** *Oriolia bernieri* was photographed in Périnet Special Reserve (Fig. 13); this appears to be only the second confirmed record for Périnet of this scarce and patchily distributed evergreen forest species, the first, also of a single female, dating from several years ago (*GV*).

Madeira

Noteworthy records from June–October 2010 include the following. A **Swinhoe's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma monorhis* was video-taped off Madeira on 3 June (per *Dutch Birding* 32: 266). On 9 September, a record 10,865 **Great Shearwaters** *Puffinus gravis* were counted at Porto Moniz. The second **Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster* for Madeira (or last year's returning individual) was observed off the Desertas Islands in late July–early September. On 26 October, the first and second **Gadwalls** *Anas strepera* for Madeira were noted: a juvenile at Lugar de Baixo and a male at Ribeira Brava. The two long-staying male **Green-winged Teals** *Anas (crecca) carolinensis* were still present in October. A **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* stayed at Lugar de Baixo in October. At the same site, a pair of **Eurasian Coots** *Fulica atra* bred successfully for the second successive year. Three waders were new for Madeira: a **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva*, photographed at Caniçal on 14 September; an adult **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** *Calidris acuminata* at Lugar de Baixo from 27 August to at least 2 September (from 28 August accompanied by a juvenile **Pectoral Sandpiper** *C. melanotos*); and a **Solitary Sandpiper** *Tringa solitaria* at Lugar de Baixo and Machico on 2 and 11 September. A **Semipalmated Sandpiper** *C. pusilla* at Machico on 30 September–1 October was the second record for the archipelago. A **Hudsonian Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus* was photographed on 24–27 August. Lugar de Baixo also produced a **Common Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus*, apparently Madeira's second, on 26 October (per *Birding World* 23: 234, 294, 338, 385, 449; *Dutch Birding* 32: 334–340).

Malaŵi

A **Pallid Honeyguide** *Indicator meliphilus* was observed at Luwawa Forest Lodge on 2 December 2010, a presumed **Jackson's Pipit** *Anthus latistriatus* on the Nyika Plateau on 1 December and two **Thyolo Alethes** *Alethe choloensis* on Mount Mulanje on 25 November. At Dzalanyama, a male **Olive-headed Weaver** *Ploceus olivaceiceps* was seen on 22 November (Fig. 14), with a pair in a different location the following day (*NB*).

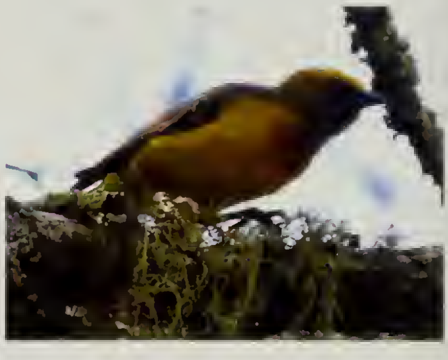

Figure 14. Olive-headed Weaver / Tisserin à tête olive *Ploceus olivaceiceps*, Dzalanyama, Malaŵi, 22 November 2010 (Nik Borrow)

Mali

In January 2010, three **Wahlberg's Honeybirds** *Prodotiscus regulus* were observed and photographed in a small valley 30 km south-west of Bamako. These are the first sightings in Mali of the species, for which there are few records in West Africa; full details will be published in this journal (*MT*).

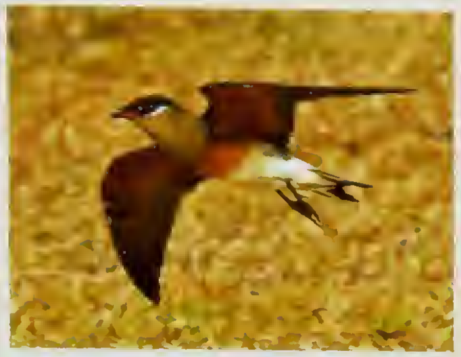

Figure 15. Madagascar Pratincole / Glaréole malgache *Glareola ocularis*, Quirimbas National Park, Mozambique, 1 October 2010 (David Hoddinott)

Morocco

Records from the period April–October 2010 are as follows. Seawatching from Cap Rhir, north of Agadir, on 14 July, produced eight **Macaronesian** (Little) **Shearwaters** *Puffinus* (*assimilis*) *baroli*, a **White-faced Storm-petrel** *Pelagodroma marina* and two **Madeiran Storm-petrels** *Oceanodroma castro*, with *c*.200 **Balearic Shearwaters** *Puffinus mauretanicus* observed there on 25 October. The long-staying **Western Reef Heron** *Egretta gularis* near Essaouira, first found on 19 April 2009, was still present in July 2010. On 3 October, up to 15 **Plain Martins** *Riparia paludicola* were seen at Oued Loukkos, Larache. A **Richard's Pipit** *Anthus richardi* was seen at Oued Souss on 27 October. In April, a presumed male hybrid **Western Mourning** *Oenanthe* (*lugens*) *halophila* × **White-crowned Wheatear** *O. leucopyga* paired with a female Western Mourning Wheatear was photographed along the Tagdilt track, near Boumalne (per *Birding World* 23: 294, 451; *Dutch Birding* 32: 266–276, 415).

Mozambique

In the second half of June 2010 some interesting species were reported from a coastal vlei at Paradise View, *c*.35 km north of Xai-Xai. Two unseasonal **Baillon's Crakes** *Porzana pusilla* were present, as well as an **Allen's Gallinule** *Porphyrio alleni*, whilst a **Dickinson's Kestrel** *Falco dickinsoni* also frequented the area. A **Brown** (Subantarctic) **Skua** *Catharacta antarctica*, presumably blown in by a storm, might represent the northernmost record of this species on southern Africa's east coast (per *TH*).

A **Madagascar Pratincole** *Glareola ocularis* recorded both near Quissanga and on Ibo Island, just north of Pemba in Quirimbas National Park, in the north, on 30 September and 1 October, appears to be the first for the country and is apparently also the southermost record in Africa (Fig. 15; *DH*).

Namibia

Records from July–December 2010 include the following. A subadult **Saddle-billed Stork** *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis* was reported from a farm *c*.30 km north of Windhoek on 29 August; this is a rare species in central Namibia, with only a few scattered records in the area (per *TH*). A **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* was at Windhoek sewage works on 28 November (*PP*). A well out-of-range **Fulvous Whistling Duck** *Dendrocygna bicolor* was observed at Walvis Bay Sewage Works on 1 August. An **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* was reported intermittently from Avis Dam, near Windhoek, from late June until November. A **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* was seen in Olympia, a suburb of Windhoek, on 9 December (per *TH*).

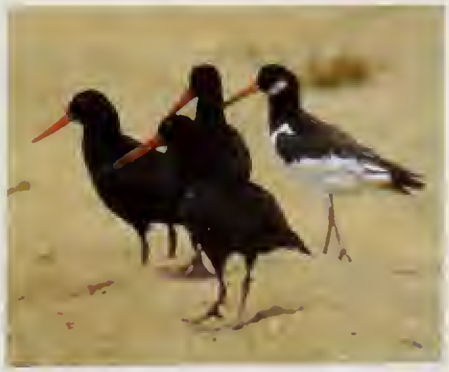

Figure 16. Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* with African Black Oystercatchers *H. moquini*, Walvis Bay Salt Works, Namibia, 26 November 2010 (Per Holmen)

Huîtrier pie *Haematopus ostralegus* avec des Huîtriers de moquin *H. moquini*, Walvis Bay Salt Works, Namibie, 26 novembre 2010 (Per Holmen)

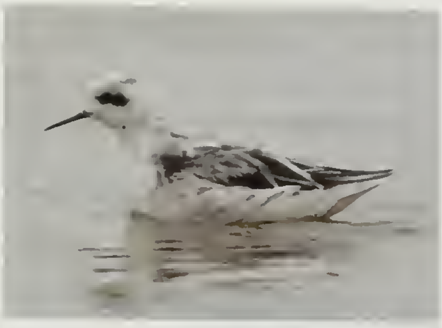

Figure 17. Red-necked Phalarope / Phalarope à bec étroit *Phalaropus lobatus*, Walvis Bay Salt Works, Namibia, 26 November 2010 (Per Holmen)

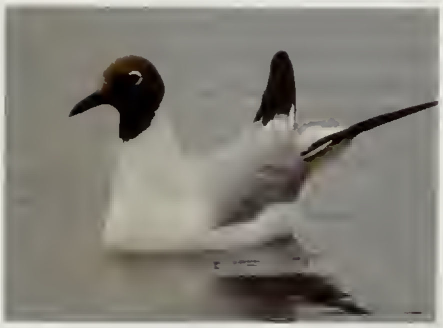

Figure 18. Common Black-headed Gull / Mouette rieuse *Larus ridibundus*, Walvis Bay, Namibia, 26 November 2010 (Per Holmen)

At Namutoni water hole, Etosha National Park, a **Lesser Jacana** *Microparra capensis* was observed on 7–8 December (*PP*). A **Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* remained at Walvis Bay Salt Works from 31 October until early December at least, with two there on 1 December (Fig. 16). Two **Common Redshanks** *Tringa totanus* were still at Mile 4 Salt Works, north of Swakopmund, from early October until mid December at least; two were also seen in the Walvis Bay area in late November. **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* were present at Walvis Bay Salt Works throughout the period (Fig. 17), their numbers fluctuating from 6–7 (in July–August) to 3–40 (in October–December). A **Common Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus* in full breeding plumage stayed at Walvis Bay from 22 October until early December at least (Fig. 18). A **Sabine's Gull** *Xema sabini* was found at Kalkheuwel waterhole near Namutoni, Etosha National Park, on 23 October, over 400 km from the coast; this is remarkably far inland for a species that mainly frequents coastal waters while wintering in southern Africa.

A **Jacobin Cuckoo** *Clamator jacobinus* was reported from the camp area at Ai Ais on 17 October, somewhat further south than its known range in the country. Two **Woodland Kingfishers** *Halcyon senegalensis* were located at a farm *c.*30 km north of Windhoek on 28 November; this is the second season that they have returned to this site, which is well south of their normal range in Namibia (per *TH*). A **Flappet Lark** *Mirafra rufocinnamomea* was singing between Namutoni and Andoni, Etosha National Park, in early December (*PP*). An out-of-range **Collared Palm Thrush** *Cichladusa arquata* regularly visited a bird bath in a farm garden near Tsumeb from 31 October until mid November at least. In early August, an exhausted juvenile **Eurasian Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus* was found along the beach near Conception Bay, south of Walvis Bay; this record is both slightly out of range and unseasonal. A **Grey-headed Bushshrike** *Malaconotus blanchoti* of the race *citrinipectus* was reported from the Kunene River Lodge gardens, in the north-west, in early September; this is a very rare bird in this part of the southern African subregion (per *TH*).

Niger

Records submitted to the Niger Bird DataBase (www.bromus.net/nibdab) since the previous Recent Reports include the following. A **Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus minutus* of the nominate race was photographed in a tree in the Tin Toumma desert on 29 September 2010 (*JN*). A nest of **Fox Kestrel** *Falco alopex* containing three eggs was photographed near Niamey in late May and early June (*SW*). Also uploaded were photographs of a **Little Crake** *Porzana parva* at Goudel near Niamey (*DC* per *BPo*). With two records of first-winter **Blue Rock Thrushes** *Monticola solitarius* from the Dallol Bosso on 19 February 2006 (*BPo*), there are now seven records of the species from Niger, including one photographed (*UL*). The subspecific identification of a male **House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*, photographed at Mainé-Soroa on 1 March 2010 (*DK*), is still a matter of debate, with *tintiganus* or *domesticus* most likely (all per *JB & UL*).

Rwanda

What appears to be the first **Amethyst Sunbird** *Chalcomitra amethystina* for Rwanda, a male, was photographed in a eucalypt and pine plantation, *c.*4 km east of Kibungo town, Ngoma District, on 21 August 2010; it was accompanied by a second bird, presumably a female. Other noteworthy records from 2010, with one from late 2009, include a **Great White Pelican** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* at Gahini on 7 February; four **Madagascar Pond Herons** *Ardeola idae* at Kageyo on 6 June; a **Forbes's Plover** *Charadrius forbesii* photographed on a small reservoir near Kageyo village on the western fringes of Akagera National Park on 22 August; a **Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*, a rare vagrant, at Gisenyi, on the shores of Lake Kivu, on 28 December 2009; a **Grey-headed Gull** *Larus cirrocephalus* at Lake Bulear on 20 March, a **Brown-backed Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas hartlaubi* at Gahini on 7 February; and a **Common Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis* at Nyankora on 28 February (*JA*).

São Tomé & Príncipe

On 1 August 2010, two **Grey-rumped Swallows** *Pseudhirundo gryseopyga* were observed in São Tomé town, above the swamp behind Hotel Omali Lodge (ex-Marlin Beach), in a large flock of Little Swifts *Apus affinis* and Palm Swifts *Cypsiurus parvus* (*PC*); the species is mentioned as 'of doubtful occurrence' in Jones & Tye (2006. *The Birds of São Tomé & Príncipe, with Annobón*), based on a single record, from Príncipe airport in September–October 1997.

Seychelles

Reports received by Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC) from the period March–November 2010 include two firsts for Seychelles: a **Black-bellied Storm-petrel** *Fregetta tropica* on Alphonse on 30 June and a **Spur-winged Lapwing** *Vanellus spinosus* on Bird Island on 17–26 November (Fig. 19).

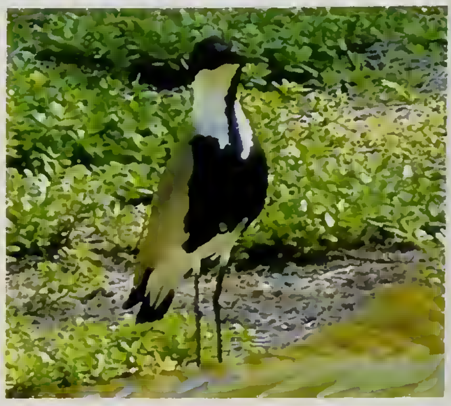

Figure 19. Spur-winged Lapwing / Vanneau à éperons *Vanellus spinosus*, Bird Island, Seychelles, 26 November 2010 (N. J. Phillips)

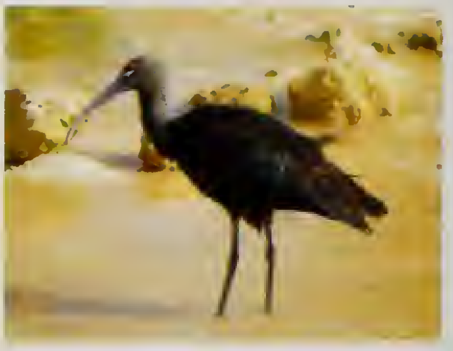

Figure 20. Glossy Ibis / Ibis falcinelle *Plegadis falcinellus*, Eden Island, Seychelles, 30 October 2010 (Adrian Skerrett)

Third reports for Seychelles include a **Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla* on Aride on 14 November and an **Ortolan Bunting** *Emberiza hortulana* on Bird Island on 22 November. A **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* on Bird Island on 17–20 November, a **Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandvicensis* on Cousine on 16 May, and at least two **Willow Warblers** *Phylloscopus trochilus* on Bird Island on 21–26 November were all fifth reports for Seychelles.

There were several reports of **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus*, including 7–8 at La Passe harbour, La Digue, on 23 March; three at Port Launay, Mahé, on 25–26 March; one at Plaisance, Mahé, on 17 June; one on Eden Island on 3

April, increasing to four by 20 April, with one remaining from 25 August until the end of November at least (Fig. 20). Some or all of the Mahé and Eden Island reports may involve the same individuals. Glossy Ibis is known in the islands from just six previous records, two of which were in late 2009.

Also of interest were a **Red-billed Tropicbird** *Phaethon aethereus* on Cousin on 10 October (six previous records); a **Great Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* on Alphonse on 31 October–1 November (five previous records); an **Indian Pond Heron** *Ardeola grayii* on Cousine on 14 September (six previous records); a **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* on Desroches on 9–11 October, one at Police Bay, Mahé, on 20 October, and another on Alphonse on 1 November; a **Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* on Bird Island on 24 November; a **Lesser Cuckoo** *Cuculus poliocephalus* on Alphonse on 11 November and another on Bird Island on 16–20 November (14 previous records); a **Broad-billed Roller** *Eurystomus glaucurus* on Bird Island on 21 November (14 previous records east of the Aldabra group where it is annual); a **Common Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia* on Alphonse on 9 November; a **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* on Bird Island on 27 November; at least four **Red-throated Pipits** *Anthus cervinus* on Bird Island on 16–24 November; a **Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* on Aride on 14 November and at least two on Bird Island on 16–23 November (11 previous records); a **European Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus* on Cousine on 15–30 October and one on Alphonse on 14 November (*AS*).

Sierra Leone

A presumed **Marsh Warbler** *Acrocephalus palustris* was photographed at Kenema rice fields on 11 November 2010; if accepted, this would be the first record for Sierra Leone and one of only a handful records in West Africa (*DM*).

Somalia

During two visits to Somaliland, in May and September 2010, the following species were noted. On 17 May the Saylac area produced **Nubian Nightjar** *Caprimulgus nubicus*, **Clamorous Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus stentoreus* and **Mangrove Reed Warbler** *A. baeticatus avicenniae*; the latter appears to be common in the area with numerous individuals still present in September. On 18 May, while driving from Saylac to Hargeysa, a female **Somali Ostrich** *Struthio molybdophanes* was seen. On 19th, the country's first **Red-breasted Wheatear** *Oenanthe bottae* was recorded near Tug Wajale, with other species including **Somali Courser** *Cursorius (cursor) somalensis* (a common species throughout the country) and **Caspian Plover** *Charadrius asiaticus*. A breeding colony of **Madagascar** (Olive) **Bee-eaters** *Merops superciliosus* was found between Hargeysa and Burao on 20 May. On 21 May, a **Sooty Falcon** *Falco concolor* was seen near Burao, and several **Little Brown Bustards** *Eupodotis humilis*, many **Lesser Hoopoe Larks** *Alaemon hamertoni*, a few **Somali Larks** *Mirafra somalica* and **Philippa's Crombec** *Sylvietta philippae* en route to Garadag (Little Brown Bustard was not uncommon on several other plains visited in September). **Archer's** (Orange River) **Francolin** *Francolinus levaillantoides lorti* and **White-rumped Swift** *Apus caffer* were seen near Daalo Forest. At Daalo, many **Warsangli Linnets** *Carduelis johannis* were observed in May, but numbers had substantially decreased by September. Also at Daalo, **Somali Thrushes** *Turdus ludoviciae* were common, whilst only a single **Archer's Buzzard** *Buteo (augur) archeri* was seen. **African Swallow-tailed Kite** *Chelictinia riocourii*, **Heuglin's Bustard** *Neotis heuglinii* and many displaying **Tawny Pipits** *Anthus campestris* were observed between Erigavo and Burao, whilst the Bohootleh area produced **Donaldson Smith's Nightjar** *Caprimulgus donaldsoni*, **Von der Decken's Hornbill** *Tockus deckeni*, **Yellow-vented Eremomela** *Eremomela icteropygialis*, **Philippa's Crombec** and **Red-naped Bushshrike** *Laniarius ruficeps*. On 28 May the country's first **Short-toed Snake Eagle** *Circaetus gallicus* was found near Berbera. On 31 May a **Golden Pipit** *Tmetothylacus tenellus* was seen on the Qorladey plains south of Hargeysa (May records: *MMi, CC, CCo, JF, GMi*; September records: *NB*).

During a boat trip to Rabshie (Maydh) Island in September, a **Wedge-tailed Shearwater** *Puffinus*

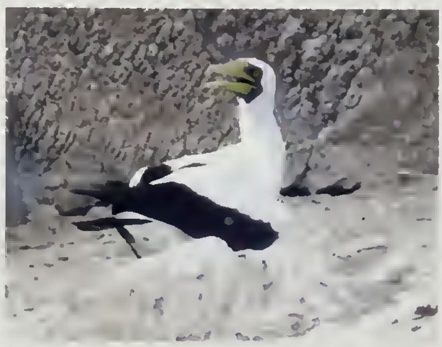

Figure 21. Masked Booby / Fou masqué *Sula dactylatra*, Rabshie (=Maydh Island), Somaliland, 16 September 2010 (Nik Borrow)

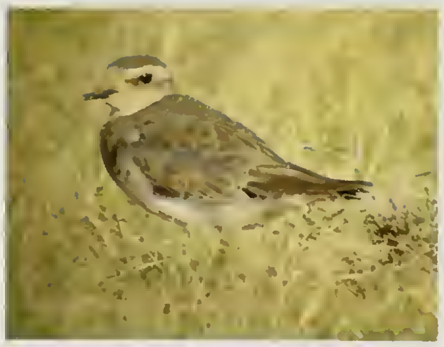

Figure 22. Caspian Plover / Pluvier asiatique *Charadrius asiaticus*, Qorladey Plains, Somaliland, 21 September 2010 (Nik Borrow)

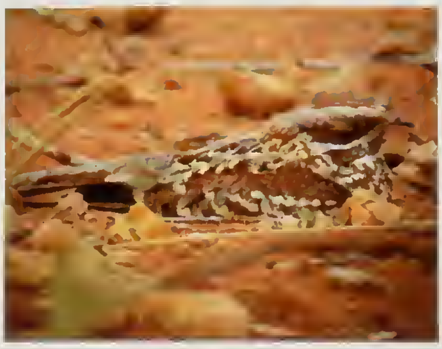

Figure 23. Donaldson Smith's Nightjar / Engoulevent des épines *Caprimulgus donaldsoni*, south-east of Burao, Somaliland, 12 September 2010 (Nik Borrow)

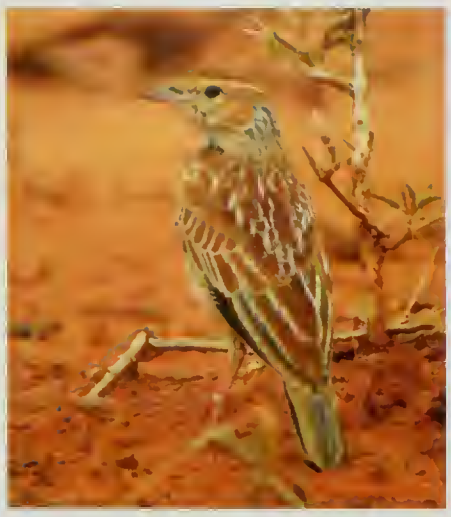

Figure 24. Collared Lark / Alouette à collier *Mirafra collaris*, south-east of Burao, Somaliland, 11 September 2010 (Nik Borrow)

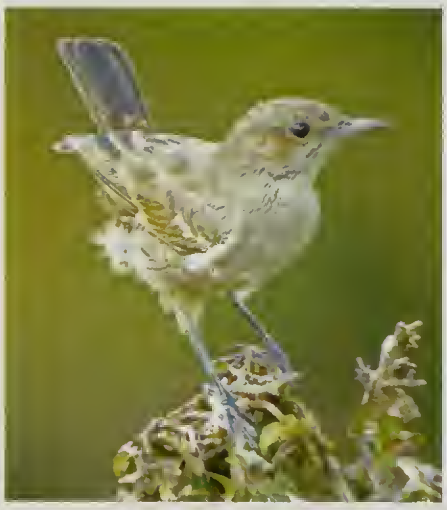

Figure 25. Sombre Rock Chat / Traquet sombre *Cercomela dubia*, north of Sheikh, Somaliland, 19 September 2010 (Nik Borrow)

pacificus, a **Wilson's Storm-petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* and three **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* were seen, whilst on the island itself a few **Red-billed Tropicbirds** *Phaethon aethereus* and several **Masked Boobies** *Sula dactylatra* (Fig. 21) were tending well-grown young amongst large numbers of breeding **Bridled Terns** *Sterna anaethetus* and **Sooty Terns** *S. fuscata*. **Abdim's Storks** *Ciconia abdimii* were still on the nest in Berbera on 20 September; this is apparently a new locality for the species. A **Short-toed Snake Eagle** was found at Daalo on 16 September and another on the Ban Cade Plains on 18th (second and third records).

A **Brown Snake Eagle** *Circaetus cinereus* was seen near Sayla on 21 September. The first modern records of **Steppe Buzzard** *Buteo* (*buteo*) *vulpinus* were noted in the Daalo area on 14 and 19 September. Two **Common Quail** *Coturnix coturnix*, flushed on the Qorladey plains on 21 September, were apparently the first records since 1956. Two **Cream-coloured Coursers** *Cursorius cursor* were seen on the Ban Cade Plains on 13 September. Three **Black-headed Lapwings** *Vanellus tectus* were seen between Saylac and Hargeysa. About 30 **Caspian Plovers** were seen on the Qorladey plains on 21 September (Fig. 22). Vocalisations and plumage characteristics suggest that a pair of owls observed at 2,100 m in Daalo Forest were more closely related to **Arabian Scops Owl** *Otus* (*senegalensis*) *pamelae* than to any subspecies of African Scops Owl *O. senegalensis*; further research is needed to establish the identity of these birds. A pair of **Donaldson Smith's Nightjars** was found south-east of Burao on 12 September (Fig. 23), whilst a **European Nightjar** *Caprimulgus europaeus* was seen flying in off the sea at midday at Maydh on 16 September. **Somali Larks** *Mirafra somalica* studied on the Tuuyo Plains and identified by voice showed plumage characteristics of **Sharpe's Lark** *M. africana sharpii* suggesting that this form represents a third subspecies of Somali Lark rather than a race of Rufous-naped Lark *M. africana*. A **Collared Lark** *M. collaris* was found in the red sand country south-east of Burao (Fig. 24); this represents the first sighting of this species in the area since the 1980s. A **Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus* was heard flying over the Wajaale Plains on 22 September. **Common Nightingales** *Luscinia megarhynchos* were common in Daalo Forest on 14–17 September. A male **Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* of the eastern race *samamisicus* was seen at Daalo on 21 September. An immature **Sombre Rock Chat** *Cercomela dubia* was photographed on the pass near Sheikh on 19 September (Fig. 25); there is only one previous historical record for the country (*NB*).

South Africa

Records from late June–late December 2010 include the following. Noteworthy species seen during pelagic trips out of the Cape Town area include **Wandering Albatross** *Diomedea exulans* (singles on 4 July, 10, 16 and 23 October, 2 and 6 November; Fig. 26), **Southern Royal Albatross** *D. epomophora* (one on 15 August, four on 25 September, a juvenile on 23 October), **Northern Royal Albatross** *D.* (*epomophora*) *sanfordi* (one on 15 August, two on 28 August, one on 30 August), **Southern Fulmar** *Fulmarius glacialoides* (singles on 26 September and 6 November), **Spectacled Petrel** *Procellaria* (*aequinoctialis*) *conspicillata* (two on 6 November, one on 29 November), **Flesh-footed Shearwater** *Puffinus carneipes* (singles on 25 September and 4 December), **Little Shearwater** *P. assimilis* (singles on 1 and 23 August), and **Red Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* (one on 30 August, and small groups on 17 October and 6 November). A trip

Figure 26. Wandering Albatross / Albatros hurleur *Diomedea exulans*, from Cape Town pelagic trip, South Africa, 10 October 2010 (Per Holmen)

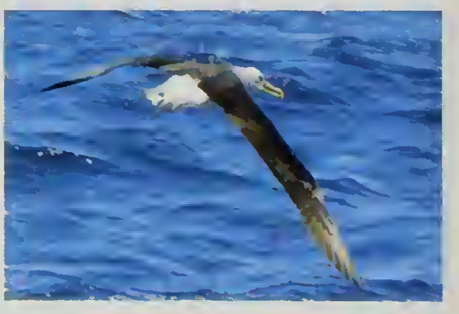

Figure 27. Buller's Albatross / Albatros de Buller *Thalassarche bulleri*, *c.*160 nautical miles south of Cape Agulhas, South Africa, 25 October 2010 (Lisa Mansfield)

that returned to Cape Town on 1 September after an extended period south of Cape Agulhas reported many **Wandering, Northern** and **Southern Royal Albatrosses** as well as a few **Little Shearwaters** and a single **Grey Petrel** *Procellaria cinerea*. An adult **Sooty Albatross** *Phoebetria fusca* was seen during a seawatch from Kommetjie lighthouse, Western Cape, on 23 August. On 25 October, southern Africa's fifth **Buller's Albatross** *Thalassarche bulleri* was seen from a trawler operating *c*.160 nautical miles south of Cape Agulhas (Fig. 27).

A **Red-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon rubricauda* visited the Kromme River estuary near St. Francis Bay, Eastern Cape, from late October until early December at least. An **Australian Gannet** *Morus serrator* was present on Malgas Island in Saldahna Bay, Western Cape, until at least 14 September. Another, found on Bird Island in Lambert's Bay on 18 November, was unringed and thus a new arrival in South Africa (all previous birds in the subregion have been ringed); it stayed until early December at least and was seen copulating with a Cape Gannet *M. capensis*. Southern Africa's second **Masked Booby** *Sula dactylatra* was reported *c*.80 nautical miles east of Kosi Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, on 4 November (Fig. 28); also seen were at least four **Greater Frigatebirds** *Fregata minor*, a **Grey Petrel** and at least 11 **Barau's Petrels** *Pterodroma baraui*. An all-dark storm-petrel photographed at sea east of Richards Bay in November was identified as southern Africa's first **Swinhoe's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma monorhis* (Fig. 29). In early December, another two **Barau's Petrels** and at least four **Red-tailed Tropicbirds** were reported at 80–200 nautical miles off Richards Bay. A **Greater Frigatebird** was seen near Hermanus, Western Cape, on 6 November; one was harassing terns at North Beach, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, on 24 November; and one flew over St. Lucia, KwaZulu-Natal, on 13 December.

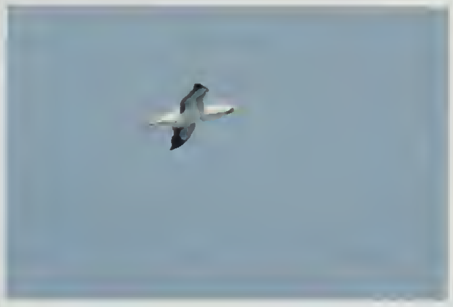

Figure 28. Masked Booby / Fou masqué *Sula dactylatra*, 80 miles north-east of Kosi Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, 4 November 2010 (Meidad Goren)

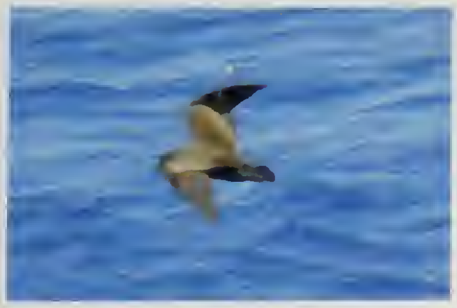

Figure 29. Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis*, 190 miles east of Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, 21 November 2010 (Meidad Goren)

A **Striated** (Green-backed) **Heron** *Butorides striata* stayed at Paarl Bird Sanctuary, Western Cape, from 27 September until 3 October; there are only a handful of previous records in the province. In Gauteng, a **Slaty Egret** *Egretta vinaceigula* was at Marievale Bird Sanctuary on 31 October. The long-staying **Goliath Heron** *Ardea goliath* at Rondevlei Nature Reserve, Western Cape, was still present throughout the period. Following the influx of **African Openbills** *Anastomus lamelligerus* throughout the country in November–December 2009, a few were still being seen during the period. Most records involved singles, a few of small groups of 2–3 birds, with the largest group being reported from the Western Cape, where 13 were still present in the Grabouw area in mid July and six at Vermont Salt Pan on 9 November. In KwaZulu-Natal, a slightly out of range and unseasonal **White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia* was near Ixopo on 14 July.

In North West Province, single **Ospreys** *Pandion haliaetus* were present at Mankwe Dam, Pilanesberg National Park (=NP), from late June until early September at least, and at Vaalkop Dam Nature Reserve on 1 August. **European Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* were reported from Benoni, Gauteng, on 24 August; Swadini, Limpopo, on 16 October; Ongoye Forest, KwaZulu-Natal, on 22 October; near Hazyview on the road to Kruger gate, Mpumalanga, on 12 November; Roodeplaat Dam Nature Reserve, Gauteng, on 15 November; Randburg, Gauteng, on 5 December; Phinda Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, in early December (several); in Simangaliso Wetland Park, KwaZulu-Natal, on 12 December (two); and in Keimoes, Northern Cape, on 16 December. In Eastern Cape, an adult **Bat Hawk** *Machaerhamphus alcinus* remained near the Wavecrest Hotel, on the southern Wild Coast, from 24 July until mid October at least. A **Black-chested Snake Eagle** *Circaetus pectoralis* was reported near Darling, Western Cape, on 3 July, and in Wilderness on 8 December. An **African Marsh Harrier** *Circus ranivorus* was near Espagsdrif, Northern Cape, on 22 August. An immature **Lesser Spotted Eagle** *Aquila pomarina* was located between Pietermaritzburg and Greytown, KwaZulu-Natal, on 8 December. An **Ayres's Hawk Eagle** *Hieraaetus ayresii* stayed at Empangeni, KwaZulu-Natal, from 29 June until mid August and in November, in Western Cape, a **Long-crested Eagle** *Lophaetus occipitalis* remained in Somerset West from late October until December. A surprisingly westerly sighting was a female **Amur Falcon** *Falco amurensis* at Langebaan, Western Cape, on 13 August.

In Eastern Cape, a **Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla* was at Mayfield Dam, Grahamstown, from 20 September until early November at least, with two there on 4 November 2010; another two were found at a small dam in the Free State. Mkhombo Dam, Mpumalanga, hosted a **Spotted Crake** *P. porzana* on 2–12 December. An **Allen's Gallinule** *Porphyrio alleni*, reported in mid June from Seekoei Lagoon near Aston Bay, Eastern Cape, was still present in mid July. A juvenile

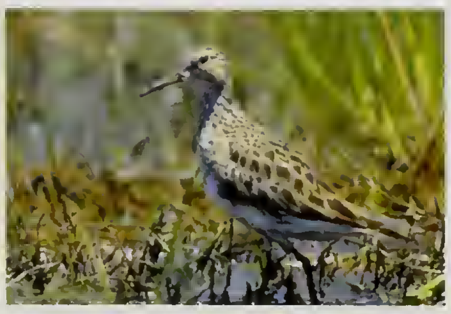

Figure 30. Pectoral Sandpiper / Bécasseau à poitrine cendrée *Calidris melanotos*, Mkhombo Dam, Mpumalanga, South Africa, 11 December 2010 (Per Holmen)

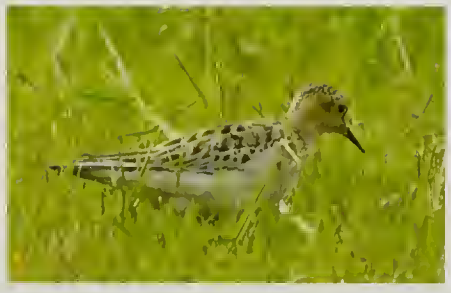

Figure 31. Buff-breasted Sandpiper / Bécasseau roussâtre *Tryngites subruficollis*, Muzi Pan, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, 20 December 2010 (Per Holmen)

Lesser Moorhen *Gallinula angulata* was seen in Hluhluwe Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, on 7 July. An out-of-range male **Denham's Bustard** *Neotis denhami* was located south of Voelvlei Dam, Western Cape, in July. A small west- and southward influx of **Ludwig's Bustards** *N. ludwigii* took place in Western Cape between late September and the end of October at least; although most sightings were of singles or small groups (of up to eight), larger groups of up to 20 (flying over Britannia Bay in the direction of Paternoster on 28 October) or even 30 (along the R27 south of Veldrif on 13 October) were recorded.

A **Lesser Jacana** *Microparra capensis* stayed near Lydenburg, Mpumalanga, on 3–8 October. In September–December, up to three **Crab-plovers** *Dromas ardeola* were present in Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal. Eight **Pied Avocets** *Recurvirostra avosetta* were at Singita Private Game Reserve, Mpumalanga, in early July. In Limpopo, a pair of **Three-banded Coursers** *Cursorius cinctus* was incubating two eggs near Ngala Tented Camp in September–early October; this may well be the southernmost breeding record. In West Coast NP, two **Lesser Sand Plovers** *Charadrius mongolus* were found on 17 September, with up to three still present on 9–14 November and one on 14 December. A **Greater Sand Plover** *C. leschenaultii* was at Barberspan Nature Reserve, North West Province, on 9 November; this constitutes the first record for the province and the first inland record in South Africa. In Limpopo, a **Caspian Plover** *C. asiaticus* was reported between Letaba and Olifants camps in Kruger NP on 17 October, with eight in Mapungubwe NP on 28 November. A **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* was discovered at Den Staat wetlands, near Mapungubwe NP, Limpopo, on 29 November. A **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* was reported from the Sappi wetlands at Stanger, KwaZulu-Natal, on 25 September; another was at Mkhombo Dam, Mpumalanga, on 27 November, with two there on 30 November–12 December at least (Fig. 30). Singles were also at Woodbourne Pan in Knysna, Western Cape, and Muzi Pan, KwaZulu-Natal, in mid December. A **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* was at Muzi Pan, KwaZulu-Natal, from 13 December (Fig. 31). In Mpumalanga, a **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* was reported from the sandbanks in front of Lower Sabie camp, Kruger NP, on 9–10 October; this may represent the first record for the park. A **Bar-tailed Godwit** *L. lapponica* at the Vaal River in the Free State on 27 November was a rather surprising find. A **Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* at Marievale Bird Sanctuary, Gauteng, on 22 August, is an interesting inland record. A **Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus* was in West Coast NP on 14 November, whilst a **Lesser Yellowlegs** *T. flavipes*, discovered at Woodbourne Pan in Knysna, Western Cape, on 29 November, may constitute the sixth record in southern Africa. **Green Sandpipers** *T. ochropus* were reported from near Bronkhorstspruit, Gauteng, on 14 November; near Malelane, Kruger NP, Mpumalanga, on 26 November; Ndumo Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, on 30 November; and Northern Farms, Gauteng, on 5 December. A **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* was on the Goukamma River estuary near Sedgefield, Western Cape, on 22 July. A female **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus* in breeding plumage was located at Chatty Pan, near Marina Salt Works, Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, on 18–19 July; an adult in non-breeding plumage was at the Tankatara Salt Pans near Port Elizabeth on 21 November. A **Red Phalarope** *P. fulicarius* was at Spitskop Dam near Kimberley, Northern Cape, on 6 September, with another at Nyamithi Pan in Ndumo Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, on 2 October.

On a fishing trip out of Richards Bay, two **South Polar Skuas** *Catharacta maccormicki* were seen *c.*80 nautical miles offshore in July (Fig. 32). A **Common Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus* was in Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, on 14 June, with one at Cape Vidal, KwaZulu-Natal, associating with the local Grey-headed Gulls *L. cirrocephalus*, on 25 July. The long-staying adult and immature **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** *L. fuscus* at Orient Beach, East London, Eastern Cape, were still present in early September. In Western Cape, the fourth **Elegant Tern** *Sterna elegans* for southern Africa was discovered at Laaiplek, Veldrif, on 5 December, whilst a **Lesser Crested Tern** *S. bengalensis* was at Yzerfontein on 12 December. The **Bridled Tern** *S. anaethetus*

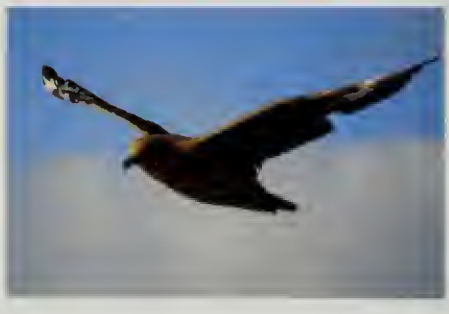

Figure 32. South Polar Skua/ Labbe de McCormick *Catharacta maccormicki*, 80 miles east of Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, 14 July 2010 (Meidad Goren)

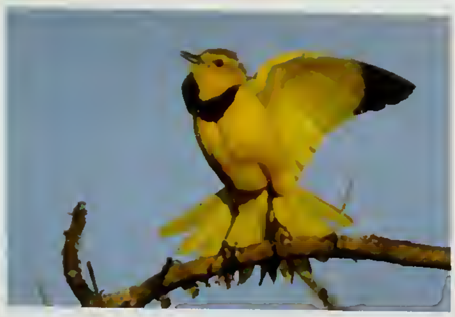

Figure 33. Male Golden Pipit / Pipit doré *Tmetothylacus tenellus*, Pongola Nature Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, 20 December 2010 (Per Holmen)

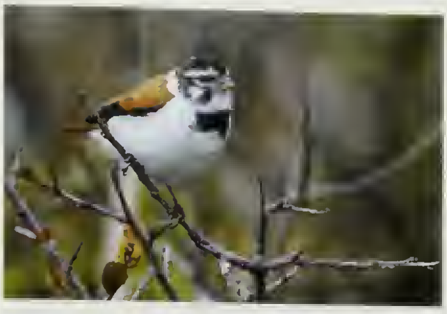

Figure 34. Black-headed ('Damara') Canary / Serin alario du Cap *Serinus alario*, West Coast National Park, Western Cape, South Africa, 17 September 2010 (Per Holmen)

that has been visiting Cape Recife, Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, for ten years, was still there in July. Presumably the same individual was on Bird Island, Algoa Bay, on 14 July, when there was also a **Sooty Tern** *S. fuscata*; the latter was also seen at Cape Recife on 23 September, and another was at the mouth of the Olifants River near Papendorp, Western Cape, on 15 December.

No fewer than 24 **Namaqua Sandgrouse** *Pterocles namaqua* were at a dam in North West Province near the border with Gauteng on 7 August; the distribution of this species is apparently shifting east. In Eastern Cape, an out-of-range flock of 18 was reported in the South Seas area, north of Fort D'Acre Nature Reserve, on 14 September. A **Thick-billed Cuckoo** *Pachycoccyx audeberti* was seen along the Sabie River in Kruger NP, Mpumalanga, on 24 July; although this is not an unusual location for the species, the time of year certainly is. In November, two other records of Thick-billed Cuckoo were made in Kruger NP, one at Ingwe Donga on 6th, and another at Lake Panic, also near Skukuza, on 7th.

A **White-fronted Bee-eater** *Merops bullockoides* found at Matjesvlei near Calitzdorp, Western Cape, on 7 September, was still in the area in December. Six **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters** *M. persicus* in St. Francis Bay, Eastern Cape, on 10 November, were well outside their normal range. A **Madagascar** (Olive) **Bee-eater** *M. superciliosus* reported from Lake Bhangazi, Eastern Cape, on 5 November, is only the third record for the province and the fourth for South Africa. A **Rufous-crowned** (Purple) **Roller** *Coracias naevius* originally reported in early April from Rooipoort Nature Reserve, near Kimberley, Northern Cape, was still present in October. A pair of **Crested Barbets** *Trachyphonus vaillantii* was photographed at a nest *c.*80 km south of Upington, Northern Cape, in early July; this fits into the trend of the species' continued westward expansion, with birds being reported regularly from Augrabies Falls NP in recent times.

In KwaZulu-Natal, a **Fawn-coloured Lark** *Calendulauda africanoides* of the race *vincenti*, known to occur sporadically as far south as Maputo, Mozambique, was reported from Tembe Elephant Park in late July. A **Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*, which remained at Debegeni Falls, Magoebaskloof, Limpopo, from 27 November until late December at least, was presumed to be the same individual that has returned to this site for the last few seasons (the species was first recorded here on 25 December 2003); from 8 December, two were present for some time and another was located in the Tugela River gorge, Royal Natal NP, KwaZulu-Natal, on 1 December. Also in December, a male **Golden Pipit** *Tmetothylacus tenellus* in Pongola Nature Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, was one of the rarity highlights of the period (Fig. 33). In Northern Cape, an out-of-range **Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis* in Nossob, Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, in late November, probably represents the first record for the province.

In KwaZulu-Natal, an adult **Capped Wheatear** *Oenanthe pileata* was reported from Cedara Agricultural College on 4–6 July. A **Sickle-winged Chat** *Cercomela sinuata* was observed between Velverdiend and Klerkskraal Dam, North West Province, on 7 August; the distribution of this species is apparently also moving east. A **Common Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis* was ringed in Darvill Bird Sanctuary, KwaZulu-Natal, on 11 December; this species is very rarely recorded in the province. Several **Collared Sunbirds** *Hedydipna collaris* were present on the edge of Kruisfontein Indigenous Forest, Western Cape, on 6 July; this is yet another record west of the traditional western limit of the species' range at Nature's Valley. In Kruger NP, a male **Purple-banded Sunbird** *Cinnyris bifasciatus* was located at Mlondozi Picnic Site, north of Lower Sabie, on 17 October; this appears to be the first certain record from the park in many years. In September–December, a southerly influx of **Black-headed Canaries** *Serinus alario* occurred in Western Cape, with flocks of up to 50 birds, mainly along the west coast, but also further east, around Oudtshoorn and George (Fig. 34); both the black-headed and the more strikingly patterned 'Damara' forms were present (per *TH*).

Sudan

During a short stay in Juba, the capital of South Sudan, in late June 2009, two species were observed that are not marked for the relevant square in Nikolaus (1987. *Distribution Atlas of Sudan's Birds*): **Striated** (Green-backed) **Heron** *Butorides striata* (one on 27th) and **Short-winged Cisticola** *Cisticola brachypterus* (a few singing on 29th). Other records included a **Harlequin Quail** *Coturnix delegorguei* flushed on 29th; a male **Pennant-winged Nightjar** *Macrodipteryx vexillarius* in breeding plumage on 26th and 29th, with two females on 29th; and a

Black-breasted Barbet *Lybius rolleti* on 26th (*BP*).

On 18 July 2010, another four species were added to the same Juba square, all seen on or beside the Nile: **Black Heron** *Egretta ardesiaca* (one), **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* (two), **Lizard Buzzard** *Kaupifalco monogrammicus* (one) and **Rock Pratincole** *Glareola nuchalis* (three), whilst two **Striated Herons** were also noted (*EL*).

Tanzania

What appears to be a juvenile **Short-toed Snake Eagle** *Circaetus gallicus* was photographed in Arusha National Park on 1 December 2010 (Fig. 35). On Lukuba Island, a gull observed on 4 October was claimed to be a **Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus michahellis* (*VS*; photographs of this and the previous species can be viewed at http://www.valeryschollaert.com/). Three **Slender-billed Gulls** *Larus genei* photographed at Lake Manyara on 25 September apparently represent the third record for the country (Fig. 36; *JC*). Two **White-thighed Hornbills** *Bycanistes albotibialis* were seen in Minziro Forest on 29 May (*MC*).

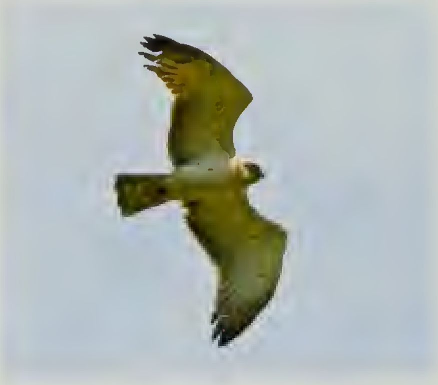

Figure 35. Juvenile Short-toed Snake Eagle / Circaète Jean-le-Blanc *Circaetus gallicus*, Arusha National Park, Tanzania, 1 December 2010 (Niall Perrins)

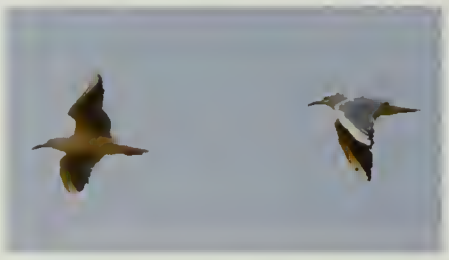

Figure 36. Slender-billed Gulls / Goélands railleurs *Larus genei*, Lake Manyara, Tanzania, 25 September 2010 (John Carlson)

Uganda

Records from May–December 2010 include the following. A flock of 650 **Lesser Flamingos** *Phoeniconaias minor* on Masech Crater Lake on 16 July is a significant count by recent standards. Two **Rufous-bellied Herons** *Ardeola rufiventris* were seen at Lukaya Flats on 21 July. A **Red-chested Flufftail** *Sarothrura rufa* was noted at Lake Nabugabo on 10 September. Fifteen **Red-knobbed Coots** *Fulica cristata* were present in Nakiwogo Bay, south of Entebbe, on 11 October (*RS*). A **Forbes's Plover** *Charadrius forbesi* was photographed at Lake Nabugabo on 27 May (Fig 37; *FH*).

Two plovers at Nabugabo on 26 August were tentatively identified as **Lesser Sand Plovers** *C. mongolus*; if accepted, this would be the third record for Uganda. A **Greater Sand Plover** *C. leschenaultii* at Entebbe on 4 September appears to be the second record for the country. Two **White-crowned Lapwings** *Vanellus albiceps* were on the Nile in Murchison Falls National Park (=NP) on 28 July; this species has only recently been recorded in Uganda. A **Great Knot** *Calidris tenuirostris* was photographed at Lutembe on 9 and 20 December; this would be the first for Uganda, if accepted (Fig. 38; *RS, ABy, MO*). Also found there, on 12 October, was a juvenile **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus*. Two **Great Snipes** *Gallinago media* first seen at Lake Nabugabo on 27 August were still present on 9 September. A **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* occurred at Lutembe Lagoon on 13 August and 17 September. Also at Lutembe, at least 94,000 **White-winged Terns** *Chlidonias leucopterus* were counted on 17 September. A flock of 230 **African Skimmers** *Rynchops flavirostris* was seen on the Kasinga channel in Queen Elizabeth NP on 15 July. Nine **Pennant-winged Nightjar** *Macrodipteryx vexillarius* were noted in Murchison Falls NP on 26 July. Also there, a gathering of 150 **Broad-billed Rollers** *Eurystomus glaucurus* was seen on 25 July.

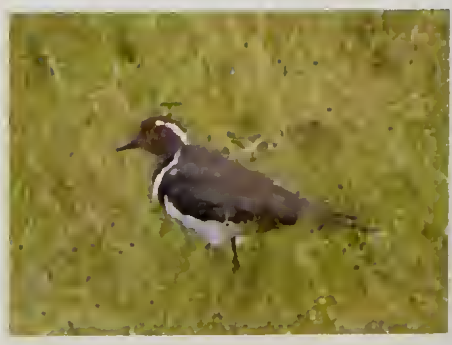

Figure 37. Forbes's Plover / Gravelot de Forbes *Charadrius forbesi*, Lake Nabugabo, Uganda, 27 May 2010 (Fred Hodgson)

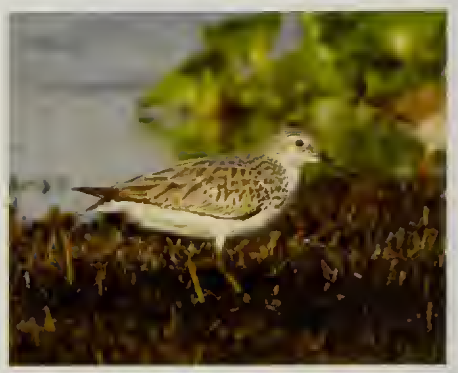

Figure 38. Great Knot / Bécasseau de l'Anadyr *Calidris tenuirostris*, Lutembe, Uganda, 20 December 2010 (Achilles Byaruhanga)

During a partial survey of Mbamba, Nabugabo and Sango Bay wetlands on 9–11 September, 167 **Blue Swallows** *Hirundo atrocaerulea* were counted. A male **Common Stonechat** *Saxicola torquatus* showing characteristics of the race *albofasciatus* was observed at Sango Bay on 11 September; this race was previously known to occur only in extreme northern Uganda. A flock of ten **Sharpe's Starlings** *Cinnyricinclus sharpii* seen in Mgahinga NP was a new record for the park. A **Cinnamon-breasted Rock Bunting** *Emberiza tahapisi* was found at the Bukata landing site near Nabugabo on 26 August (*RS*).

Zambia

A **Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra* was seen at Chisamba, near Lusaka, on 28 and 30 December 2010 at the southern limit of its normal wintering range (*BvdB*; Fig. 39).

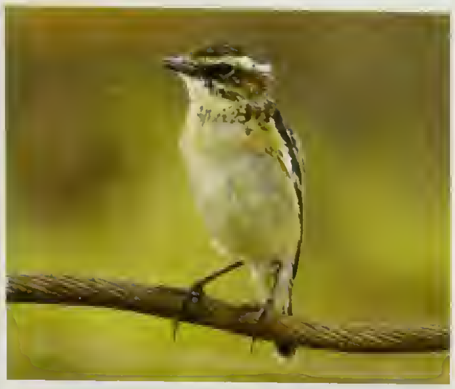

Figure 39. Whinchat / Tarier des prés *Saxicola rubetra*, Chisamba, Zambia, December 2010 (Bennie van den Brink)

Zimbabwe

A **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* was at Aberfoyle Tea Estate on 4 October. In November, a **Yellowbill** *Ceuthmochares aereus* stayed at Goliath Safaris Camp, Mana Pools National Park; this appears to be well north-west of other records in the country. A male **Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* was photographed on the lawn of the Trader Horn Boat Club at Lake Chivero on 12 December; this is a rare vagrant, with only a few records for southern Africa (per *TH*).

Records were collated by Ron Demey from contributions supplied by Jason Anderson (JA), Vaughan Ashby / Birdfinders (VA), Ahmed Badry Sayed (AB), Sherif Baha El Din (SB), BirdLife Botswana (BLB), Richard Bashford (RB), Nik Borrow / Birdquest (NB), Dayne Braine (DB), Chris Brewster (CB), Bennie van den Brink (BvdB), Joost Brouwer (JB), Achilles Byaruhanga (ABy), John C. Carlson (JC), Clide Carter (CC), Patrice Christy (PC), Marcell Claassen (MC), Callan Cohen (CCo), Mohamed Balla Condé (MBC), Simon Cook (SC), Daniel Cornélis (DC), Peter D'Arcy (PD), Robert J. Dowsett (RJD), Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire (FD-L), Marco Fioratti (MF), Julian Francis (JF), Mike Goldsworthy (MG), Meidad Goren (MGo), Trevor Hardaker (TH), David Hoddinott / Rockjumper Birding Tours (DH), Fred Hodgson (FH), Colin Jackson (CJ), David Kusserow (DK), Peter Laver (PL), Enrico Leonardi (EL), Ulf Liedén (UL), Chris Lotz (CL), Martim Melo (MM), Gus Mills (GMi), Michael Mills (MMi), David Monticelli (DM), John Newby / Sahara Conservation Fund (JN), Pat Nurse (PN), M. Opigi (MO), Phil Palmer (PP), Bram Piot (BP), Wouter Plomp (WP), Bruno Portier (BPo), Luke Saffarek (LS), Valéry Schollaert (VS), Roger Skeen (RS), Adrian Skerrett (AS), Robert Smith (RSm), Derek Solomon (DS), Susan Solomon (SS), Marco Thoma (MT), Glen Valentine / Rockjumper Birding Tours (GV), Alexandre Vaz (AV), Stephen Walters (SW), Ian White (IW), and from Africa—Birds & Birding, Birding World, Dutch Birding, Sandgrouse, *SARareBirdAlert, www.zestforbirds.co.za and sa-rarebirdnews@googlegroups.com.*

Contributions for Recent Reports can be sent to Ron Demey, Tenierslaan 24, B-3500 Hasselt, Belgium and (preferably) by e-mail: rondemey1@gmail.com or recent_reports@africanbirdclub.org

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Reviews

Oiseaux de Mauritanie / Birds of Mauritania

Paul Isenmann, Maurice Benmergui, Peter Browne, Amadou Diam Ba, Checkh Hamallah Diagana, Yelli Diawara & Zeine El Abidine ould Sidaty, 2010. Paris: Société d'Études Ornithologiques de France. 408 pp, more than 80 colour photographs and four maps. Softback. ISBN 2–916802–02–9. UK£35 / €38.

Mauritania is probably best known for the Banc d'Arguin, a key site for colonial waterbirds and Palearctic waders, whose ornithological treasures were (re)discovered in 1959 and which has been the object of considerable research ever since. And rightly so: harbouring *c.*2 million shorebirds, this unique area is indeed the most important wintering ground for these species along the entire West African coast. It is one of Mauritania's two national parks (established in 1976), the second, created in 1994, being another coastal wetland area, the Diawling, which covers the Mauritanian sector of the Senegal Delta and constitutes the counterpart of Senegal's Djoudj. It is perhaps somewhat ironic that Mauritania is most famous for its waterbirds when three-quarters of its surface area is desert, the remaining, southernmost part, belonging to the Sahel. Mauritania's landbirds are thus also worth studying, especially as the majority of the country lies in the transition zone between the Palearctic and Afrotropical regions.

The first annotated checklist of the birds of Mauritania, published in 1988 by Bruno Lamarche, was mainly based on the author's own observations, with about one-third of the records from other observers. Although a laudable attempt to present what was then known of the country's avifauna, it needed to be used with caution, due to the many rather vague or erroneous statements contained therein. It has taken more than 20 years, but finally we have a thoroughly revised and updated Mauritanian list.

This is the third annotated checklist published recently by the French ornithological society (Société d'Études Ornithologiques de France) with Paul Isenmann as first author, following *Birds of Algeria* (2000) and *Birds of Tunisia* (2005). It has the same format and appealing layout as its predecessors and is also bilingual French/English throughout—an extremely useful feature which will undoubtedly greatly enhance interest in the non-Francophone world. Introductory chapters present geography and climate, the history of ornithology in Mauritania, the biogeographical affinities of Mauritanian breeding birds, and the Palearctic–Afrotropical bird migration systems. The bulk of the book constitutes the 300-page annotated checklist, which provides details for the 506 species hitherto recorded with certainty in the country. Of these, more than 200 are Palearctic migrants, whilst 258 species are known or presumed to breed in the country, of which 208 are found in its Sahelian part. Finally, an annotated list is presented of 86 species that have not been retained: these include records (mainly from Lamarche's work) that are highly unlikely or clearly erroneous, insufficiently documented or single-observer only sightings. At the time of writing, many of these species figure on the ABC checklist (available as a .pdf on www.africanbirdclub.org), which in part explains the discrepancies between the latter and *Birds of Mauritania*. The book also accepts more than 20 species not on the current ABC list. The length of the species accounts varies from a few lines for rare vagrants to a full page or more for regular species; all records have been referenced. Where relevant, information is provided on the species' status in neighbouring countries or elsewhere in West Africa, usefully placing data into perspective. A few recent additions to the country list, e.g. Red-rumped Wheatear *Oenanthe moesta* and Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*, whose single record appears for the first time in print in this book, are not properly documented—a missed opportunity. Unlike in its predecessors, there are no distribution maps for the breeding species, which some may find disappointing: although maps are not essential, they permit one to understand a species' occurrence at a glance. However, the decision not to include distribution maps appears to be due to the dearth of available data for the landbirds, which is made clear in the species accounts.

Overall, this is a well-researched and attractively produced volume. Written by an international team including Mauritanian ornithologists, it contains a wealth of data and undoubtedly will become the yardstick by which observations will be assessed for many years to come. Additionally, it highlights the important gaps that still exist in our knowledge of Mauritania's avifauna: for example, large areas in the south have barely been explored during the wet season and for many species proof of breeding is still lacking. Hopefully, this book will stimulate both foreign and local ornithologists and birders to start filling those gaps.

Ron Demey

Reference

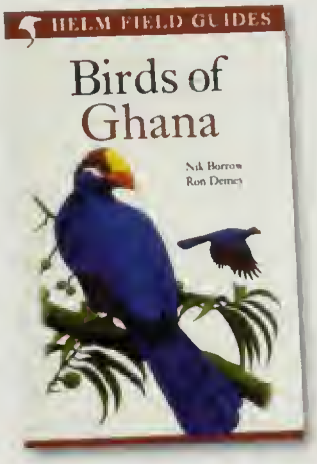
Lamarche, B. 1988. Liste commentée des oiseaux de Mauritanie. *Études Sahariennes et Ouest-Africaines* 1(4): 1–162. Nouakchott & Paris: Privately published.

Birds of Ghana

Nik Borrow & Ron Demey, 2010. London, UK: Christopher Helm. 352 pp, 145 colour plates and 758 colour distribution maps. Softback. ISBN 978–1-4081–2279–2. UK£29.99.

I had expected this field guide to be 'just' a condensed version of the *Field Guide to the Birds of Western Africa* (2004) by the same authors, which is itself a portable version of their *Birds of Western Africa* (2001). I was wrong. Most of the illustrations are indeed repeated from those volumes, but apart from restricting its scope to species recorded only in Ghana (and neighbouring Togo) a number of significant improvements and innovations have been made.

The reduced number of species (758 compared to 1,304 in the 2004 field guide) has enabled the authors to enlarge most of the illustrations to the same size as those in *Birds of Western Africa*, whilst maintaining a compact field guide format, slimmer than the 2004 guide. All of the plates have been printed with a white background (rather than the original tinted backgrounds used in some plates), which I think works well, even for largely white species such as egrets and gulls. Maps, texts and plates are located together, with a page of text and maps facing each plate, which means all of the information for each species is visible without turning pages. With only around five species per page, rather than ten or more as in the 2004 field guide, there is space for more expansive texts: in addition to highlighting key identification features, fuller (though still brief) descriptions of habitat and habits are provided.



Extra space is also gained through the obvious omission of subspecies from Lower Guinea or elsewhere. For instance, only the green-tailed subspecies of Red-tailed Greenbul *Criniger calurus* is shown, which should limit the confusion created by its English name. The restricted geographic scope of necessity cuts out much information irrelevant to the birder visiting only Ghana or Togo. In the 2004 guide, 25 species of cisticola were covered, but only a more manageable 11 are included here. There is a risk that a few species have been excluded which might ultimately be discovered in Ghana (e.g., Lesser Jacana *Microparra capensis*), but the line has to be drawn somewhere and the overall species selection appears sensible.

Most of the maps have been redrawn, to show just Ghana and immediately adjacent regions of neighbouring countries, including all of Togo. In some cases genuine improvements to the accuracy of the maps as a result of new discoveries have been made. For example, African Barred Owlet *Glaucidium capense*, Nimba Flycatcher *Melaenornis annamarulae* and other species have been discovered in Ghana since 2004, and other species, such as Baumann's Greenbul *Phyllastrephus baumanni* and Grey-throated Flycatcher *Myioparus griseigularis*, are more widespread than was previously realised (see Dowsett *et al.* 2007 for a complete list). In many other instances, however, the maps are still quite sketchy, reflecting current knowledge of the distribution of birds in Ghana. Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire and Bob Dowsett are preparing an atlas of the birds of Ghana that will do much to remedy this. Unfortunately, the map for Shikra *Accipiter badius* has been repeated in error for African Goshawk *A. tachiro*. As with the 2004 guide, the maps should not be taken too literally: to do so would suggest, for example, that Cape Three Points lacks forest bristlebills, greenbuls, drongos and malimbes, which is certainly not the case (pers. obs.).

Some new illustrations are incorporated, particularly of birds in flight (especially useful in the case of the quails). There are also new depictions of the small herons, many of the warblers and some flycatchers. Many of these new additions possess a more expressive, lively style than the old, which adds character but does not always work when new and old are juxtaposed on the same plate. The new illustration of Pale Flycatcher *Melaenornis pallidus* is an improvement and 'fits' in well, but I was less convinced by the Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*, and the mix of styles for Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* is somewhat jarring. Some minor weaknesses in the old plates remain to be corrected: the proportions of Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* appear quite odd, and the text describes the eye of juvenile Grey-headed Negrofinch *Nigrita canicapillus* as pale grey whilst the plate depicts it as reddish brown. However, these are minor criticisms and, overall, Nik Borrow's artwork is excellent.

The numbering system used in both previous books has been sacrificed, so rather than having to establish what '4b' refers to, species, subspecies, sex and plumage are indicated on the plates. Other useful improvements include a list of bird names in Akan (=Twi/Fante), Ewe and Gonja. A short guide to pronunciation would have been useful, to explain, for instance that the 'kyi' in the evocative name 'Kokokyinaka' (Great Blue Turaco

Corythaeola cristata) is pronounced 'chi' as in chiffchaff. Other nice additions include a road map of Ghana, a map of Important Bird Areas (which provides some indication of places to explore beyond the best-known localities of Kakum, Atewa and Mole) and a one-page quick index to the main avian groups, as well as a conventional index and three pages of up-to-date references. More guidance on where to send interesting records would have been useful: the address of the Ghana Wildlife Society is given, but georeferenced records will also be of interest to the Dowsetts, and to recording schemes such as WorldBirds (http://www.worldbirds.org).

As with the 2004 field guide, species texts are cross-referenced to a superb set of sound-recordings (Chappuis 2000), a really useful feature for anyone endeavouring to get to grips with vocalisations. One error from Chappuis has not been corrected: the recording of Yellow-spotted Barbet *Buccanodon duchaillui* is not of the West African dialect, although this dialect is described accurately in the text. The West African dialect of Yellow-spotted Barbet is mislabelled by Chappuis as Naked-faced Barbet *Gymnobucco calvus*.

So, if you are travelling to Ghana should you take this guide or the *Field Guide to the Birds of Western Africa*? If visiting only Ghana, I would not hesitate to recommend this guide. It includes every species you are likely to see, with larger illustrations, more up-to-date maps and more detailed information. Those making multiple visits to the country and other parts of West Africa will probably want to own both.

Ben Phalan

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The Birds of São Tomé e Príncipe: A Photoguide

A. P. Leventis & Fábio Olmos, 2009. São Paulo: Ed. Aves & Fotos. 142 pp, many photographs. Softback. ISBN 978–85–98153–06–3. UK£19.99.

The islands of São Tomé and Príncipe are well known amongst birders but are little visited. Being oceanic islands of volcanic origin, they have never been connected to the African mainland and consequently host an avifauna that is unique in Africa, boasting over 25 endemic species of bird. Similar rates of endemism exist within other groups of animals and plants, and the islands can truly be said to be the African Galápagos.

Prior to the publication of this book there was no widely available guide in English dealing solely with the birds of the two islands. This photographic guide fills the gap and, for the first time, brings together photographs of all the endemics, including extreme rarities such as São Tomé Fiscal Shrike *Lanius newtoni* and São Tomé Grosbeak *Neospiza concolor*. Few people have seen the grosbeak let alone taken such an excellent series of photos. The guide also draws on the latest genetic research and, for example, splits Gulf of Guinea Thrush *Turdus olivaceofuscus* into two species (São Tomé *T. olivaceofuscus* and Príncipe Thrushes *T. (o.) xanthorhynchus*). The photographs are generally very good to excellent, although a Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta* is incorrectly labelled as a Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*. However, the value of the publication really lies in documenting the endemics, several of which are considered Critically Endangered. In this, the authors have done an excellent job.

Each species is treated separately and includes a few paragraphs of English and Portuguese text detailing the species' life history and habits. Identification is generally quite easy given the very restricted number of breeding landbirds (33 on Príncipe and 51 on São Tomé) and the good-quality photos further facilitate the task. The Portuguese text makes the book accessible to the growing conservation community on the islands. Most islanders do not realise the uniqueness of their flora and fauna, and books such as this encourage both external and internal interest.

The 12-page introduction really sets the scene—the islands are not only fascinating from a natural historian's point of view, but also possess a rich history born out of the slave trade, growing into the world's largest cocoa producer before then gradually going into decline. The introduction covers these issues and describes the different habitats, the endemic fauna and current conservation problems.

If you are planning a visit then this book will be essential—the photos, details of habitats, maps showing important birding locations, etc., will all be extremely useful. Even if not considering a visit, this book is also definitely worth buying for the photos of some species not available elsewhere. Planning an independent visit to São Tomé and Príncipe is certainly feasible and it would be nice to see a sister publication detailing important birding spots, information about guides and good logistic information.

Phil Atkinson

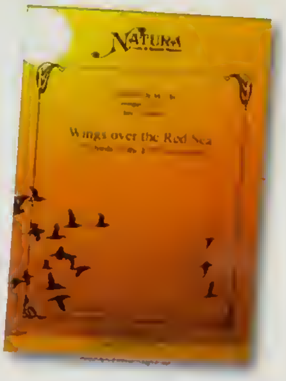
Wings Over the Red Sea: The Birds of the Eritrean Islands

Giuseppe De Marchi, Giorgio Chiozzi and Dawit Semere, 2009. Natura Volume 99/2. Milan: Societa Italiana di Scienze Naturale. 128 pp, numerous photographs and maps. Softback. ISSN 0369–6243. Price unknown.

The last year or two has seen several publications of significance dealing with the birds of Eritrea, for example Semere *et al.* (2008), Ash & Atkins (2009), Redman *et al.* (2009) and Anderson (2010), and this volume on the birds of the Eritrean Red Sea islands represents a further important contribution. It summarises data collected during 2001–09 as part of an ongoing joint research project, focusing mainly on the breeding biology of the Crab-plover *Dromas ardeola*, by a team of researchers from the Museo di Storia Naturale di Milano, the Department of Animal Biology at the University of Pavia and the Eritrean Ministry of Fisheries. These data are supported with further reference to the historical record.

There are informative chapters on the history of ornithological exploration of the Eritrean Red Sea, its geological history, topography and climate, ecology of the different marine and terrestrial habitats, and migration. The bulk of the book comprises the species accounts, supported by many excellent colour photographs, for the 237 terrestrial and marine species recorded from the islands. The volume concludes with an important chapter on conservation and a bibliography.

Using categories from Fishpool & Evans (2001), the authors confirm the importance of Eritrean coastal waters and islands for the global conservation of birds based on the presence of significant populations of seabirds, waterbirds and certain terrestrial migratory species. The coastal bays of Iddi, Howakil, Thio and Mersa Fatma are shown to be extremely important year-round for several thousand Socotra Cormorants *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*, though breeding has yet to be confirmed. The islands provide breeding grounds for >8,500 pairs of Crab-plover, representing at least 20% of the world population and probably the largest concentration anywhere. Other seabirds with significant breeding populations include Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* (10,000 breeding pairs on 46 islands; 10% of the estimated world population), White-eyed Gull *Larus leucophthalmus* (5,900 pairs on 49 islands; *c*.30% of the world breeding population), Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* (63,000 breeding pairs in 40 colonies on 32 islands); White-cheeked Tern *S. repressa* (18,000 breeding pairs on 69 islands); Bridled Tern *S. anaethetus* (30,000–35,000 breeding pairs on 66 islands) and Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* (11,000 pairs on six islands). In addition to these very significant numbers of breeding seabirds, the southern Eritrean islands are shown to be important for the huge number of soaring migratory birds that pass over the Bab al-Mandeb strait.



I would have appreciated a more detailed map of the islands and more detailed information in the species accounts, particularly where conclusions are drawn from the historical record. Nevertheless, this volume represents an important contribution to the growing literature on the status of the birds of Eritrea and adds significantly to our knowledge of the avifauna of the Eritrean islands. I would recommend it to any potential visitor with an interest in visiting the islands of the Eritrean Red Sea.

One further pertinent point is made by the authors in the introduction. Many Italian museum collections are as yet uncatalogued or unpublished, and some were destroyed or dispersed during the Second World War. Those collections extant may still prove to be a very valuable source of new knowledge about the Eritrean bird fauna and possibly volumes such as this may kindle an initiative to catalogue and publish them.

John Atkins

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Birds of Africa South of the Sahara (second revised edition)

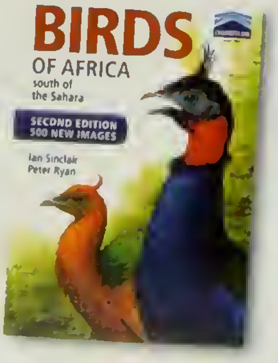
Ian Sinclair & Peter Ryan, 2010. Cape Town: Struik Nature. 767 pp, 363 colour plates and many maps. Softback. ISBN 978–1–7700–7623–5. R395.00. (Available in Europe from New Holland Publishers, UK£29.99.)

When the first edition of this book appeared in 2003 it certainly made an impact! Never before had a single volume covered all of the species found in Africa south of the Sahara. Also within its pages were new splits that were unexpected and some new names that were unfamiliar, making it perhaps unsurprising that opinions concerning the book tended to be polarised. In the intervening years between first and second editions, I believe that its fans have outnumbered the critics, and while it covers too many species to compete effectively as a field guide, the book certainly proves a very accessible resource for those wishing to compare most of Africa's birds in one place.

In total the book covers 2,129 species (a net increase of 24 over the first edition). The northern geographical cut-off is at 20ºN and whilst Socotra and the Gulf of Guinea islands are included, Madagascar and other endemic-rich islands in the Indian or Atlantic Oceans are not. However, seabirds known to occur within 200 nautical miles of the continent are covered.

Sporting a striking new cover design, this edition also features over 500 new illustrations by Norman Arlott, with much-improved plates for several groups including francolins, spurfowls, rails, pigeons, coucals, fishing owls, scops owls, barbets, woodpeckers, larks, drongos, orioles, warblers and white-eyes. The addition of helpful annotations on the plates is very welcome, but the removal of gender icons where only the male is shown is a backward step that could generate confusion. The text has been updated and often expanded with useful notes on identification, habitat, status and voice. BirdLife International's conservation designations for the most threatened species have also been added.

Small distribution maps are presented for each species but, as before, no attempt has been made to differentiate between breeding and non-breeding ranges of migratory species. Similarly, Palearctic species that winter in Africa are only shown at their winter range with no indication of likely occurrence on passage. The recent publication of atlas data from Ethiopia, Somalia, Uganda, Malaŵi and Zambia has permitted many maps to be refined, and this is particularly noticeable for some passerines such as weavers and sparrows. Extralimital records have also been added in many cases.



Given that Peter Ryan is an adviser to the IOC World Bird List (www.worldbirdnames.org/) it is no surprise that the book largely follows the nomenclature used by that project. There are exceptions and the authors have removed three species ahead of the IOC. These are White-crowned Cliff-Chat *Thamnolaea coronata* (subsumed into Mocking Cliff-Chat *T. cinnamomeiventris*), Reichenow's Batis *Batis reichenowi* (= Short-tailed Batis *B. mixta*) and both São Tomé *Alcedo thomensis* and Príncipe Kingfishers *A. nias* (= Malachite Kingfisher *A. cristata*). Species now lumped in line with IOC include Heuglin's Gull *Larus heuglini* (in Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus*), Bale Parisoma *Parisoma griseiventris* (in Brown Parisoma *P. lugens*), Agulhas Clapper Lark *Mirafra marjoriae* (in Cape Clapper Lark *M. apiata*), Damara Canary *Crithagra leucolaema* (in Black-headed Canary *C. alario*), while Western *Stiphrornis erythrothorax*, Eastern *S. xanthogaster*, Gabon *S. gabonensis* and Sangha Forest Robins *S. sanghensis* are all now lumped within Forest Robin *S. erythrothorax*. Also deleted are Bulo Burti Bushshrike *Laniarius liberatus* and Degodi Lark *Mirafra degodiensis*, both of which are widely accepted as synonyms of other species.

The authors confess in their opening chapter to a certain amount of 'kite-flying' with respect to the splits that they included in the first edition, and once again they offer some splits that will raise a few eyebrows, but most are already accepted elsewhere. 'New' species added include Southern Royal Albatross *Diomedea epomophora*, Arabian Shearwater *Puffinus persicus*, Tropical Shearwater *Puffinus bailloni*, Socotra Buzzard *Buteo 'socotrae'* (though since described officially as *B. socotraensis*), Archer's Buzzard *B. archeri*, Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans*, Socotra Scops Owl *Otus socotranus*, Usambara Greenbul *Phyllastrephus albigula*, Rubeho Akalat *Sheppardia aurantiithorax*, Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maurus*, Hartert's Camaroptera *Camaroptera harterti*, Atlas Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula speculigera*, Western Black-headed Batis *Batis erlangeri*, Dark Batis *B. crypta*, East Coast Boubou *Laniarius sublacteus*, Somali Boubou *L. erlangeri*, Willard's Sooty Boubou *L. willardi*, Príncipe White-eye *Zosterops ficedulinus*, Abd al-Kuri Sparrow *Passer hemileucus*, Jameson's Antpecker *Parmoptila jamesoni*, Lufira Masked Weaver *Ploceus ruweti*, Katanga Masked Weaver *P. katangae*, Vincent's Bunting *Emberiza vincenti* and Striated Bunting *E. striolata*.

This is a monumental work, and it spends more time on my desk than on the shelf. However, I have no intention of taking it into the field. For me it brings together in one place a huge amount of information in a design that permits rapid access, and for that reason above all others I recommend it.

Keith Betton

Facing Extinction. The World's Rarest Birds and the Race to Save Them

Paul F. Donald, Nigel J. Collar, Stuart J. Marsden & Deborah J. Pain, 2010. London, UK: T. & A. D. Poyser. 312 pp, many photographs and maps. Hardback. ISBN 978–0-7136–7921–9. UK£44.99.

Whether or not we are in the midst of the so-called Sixth Great Extinction—this time human-induced, although there is some debate about this—this book is a timely exploration of the issue as it currently plays out for birds. The authors are scientifically and professionally very well qualified to speak on this issue, although when I started to read the book, I wondered if the writing would successfully combine academic treatment with inspiration? It does so, and requires the reader to alternate between the serious consideration of issues and the showcase studies of how conservation knowledge can help save birds.

The first two chapters on the nature and patterns of rarity are detailed and thought provoking, and explain well our interest in all things rare. Where birds fit in the rarity of nature sits nicely with consideration of the world's rarest bird, and unusually the importance of rarity, not least for conservation, is emphasised well. These concepts are seldom treated in depth, and the authors strike a nice balance between detail and accessibility.

The species chapters include examples from all the major continents, and begin with an up-to-date account of using satellite tags to discover the African wintering grounds of Sociable Lapwing *Vanellus gregarius* in Sudan. This finding completed our life cycle knowledge of this threatened bird, and enabled planning for its effective conservation. The most exciting and intrepid story of conserving a threatened African bird is the rediscovery of the Madagascar Pochard *Aythya innotata* and subsequent action to ensure its survival. Hair-raising logistics, serious conservation science and personal passion (one of the conservationists named his daughter Aythya after this mythical bird!) combine to make threatened extinction come alive for anybody reading this book. Making the issue relevant to people is surely part of the requirement. The chapter on the Liben Lark *Heteromirafra sidamoensis* of southern Ethiopia is highly topical in the year Birdfair 2010 proceeds are contributing to conservation programmes for this and other southern Ethiopian endemics. Let us hope the recently acquired and careful knowledge of this lark's requirements described here means the Liben Lark escapes the dubious accolade of mainland Africa's first bird extinction of historical times.

Rarity and extinction on islands looks at the special threats experienced by species as diverse as Tristan Albatross *Diomedea dabbenena* and Raso Lark *Alauda razae*, whilst the section on saving the world's rarest birds travels the globe incorporating the well-known stories of Kakapo *Strigops habroptila* in New Zealand and Spix's Macaw *Cyanopsitta spixii* in Brazil, with the very recent demise of Asia's vultures. The book ends with a thoughtful look to the future, recognising that hope lies in the skills of conservationists learnt through experiencing the extinctions and near extinctions described here. Lost and found includes our current knowledge of two possibly extinct curlews. For me this account raises an intriguing possibility—will the Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* be rediscovered on a remote North African shore this winter? This book inspires us to keep looking!

Andy Clements

Safari Sketchbook: A Bird Painter's African Odyssey

Martin Woodcock, 2010. Wiveton: Esker Press. 176 pp, many colour and black-and-white drawings. Hardback. ISBN 978–0-9564016–0-1. UK£45.00.

Anyone interested in African birding knows the Woodcock name. Probably for longer than he cares to remember, Martin illustrated the epic *Birds of Africa*: he painted all of the plates except plates 1–17 in the first of the seven volumes—a task all the more impressive given the series had five editors, and a long roll-call of contributors to its text, but just one stoic artist.

As Sir John Chapple writes in his Foreword to *Safari Sketchbook*, Martin's familiar illustrations first emerged in Ben King's *Field Guide to the Birds of South-East Asia*, a groundbreaking book that had a generation of birders hankering to visit the region. Now field guides are so readily available, it is easy to overlook the vital role artists like Martin played in opening up tropical birding.

Safari Sketchbook is organised into nine chapters beginning with Martin's first journey to Africa in 1961. Visiting his sister in Uganda, more than 15 years before the invitation came to illustrate *Birds of Africa*, Martin started to get to grips with the birds of Kampala, before going onto Murchison, taking a boat trip on the Nile and recalling that the birds 'came so thick and fast I had trouble keeping up with my notes'; a sentiment most first-timers birding in East Africa will remember well.

Each chapter deals with a specific site or two. Many are well known, like Lake Baringo and Kakamega Forest in Kenya, but others less so, like Ruaha National Park in central Tanzania and the remote Minzoro Forest in the north-west of the same country. Martin joined an expedition there in 1987. Mist-netting provided some difficult-to-see birds, like White-bellied Kingfisher *Alcedo leucogaster*, and Martin sketched one with its brilliant turquoise and blue barred crown fanned up and recalling its widespread open-country cousin, Malachite Kingfisher *A. cristata*. Indeed, many of Martin's site visits remind one of the staggering avifauna Africa harbours, not least Selous Game Reserve with Boehm's *Merops boehmi* alongside seven other bee-eater species.

Most of Martin's illustrations are sketches, either in pencil and watercolour, less often pen, but with occasional finished paintings of birds like African Blue Flycatcher *Elminia longicauda*, and the striking Blue-shouldered Robin-Chat *Cossypha cyanocampter* of his cover. There are also a few oils, or pastels, and full pages of pencil drawings of vegetation, including sketches of the bizarre whistling thorn, each black gall hosting a small colony of belligerent ants. With his hand-written notes reproduced alongside, Martin's sketches provide a strong sense of the painstaking work underlying the final *Birds of Africa* plates.

His text relates the circumstances surrounding particular drawings, and he has a deft sense of description for the inevitable close encounters—snakes and large mammals, as well as for the birds, with the pale pink-lidded Verreaux's Eagle Owl *Bubo lacteus* likened to Greta Garbo or Bette Davis, and swimming pelicans to planes that have cut their engines. Martin also painted the *Ibis* holotype illustration of that 'sensational ornithological find' Udzungwa Forest Partridge *Xenoperdix udzungwensis*. Famously, its yellow legs surfaced in a bowl of stew, stunning its Danish finders, and adding another endemic to the iconic species occupying the broken necklace of forests in Tanzania's Eastern Arc.

The book concludes in Cameroon where Martin joined a punishing trip ringing on Mount Kupé. Best bird for Martin was a Grey-necked Picarthartes *Picathartes oreas*. In the hand, 'it was half-way between holding a hare and particularly vigorous bantam cock', and 'The real wonder for me lay in its eyes—very large and intensely black, but also amazingly luminous, with great depths like a starlit night. I wondered how many millions of years eyes like this had been scanning the forest floor'. This acute sense of wonder is typical of the enquiring, warm-hearted spirit that flows throughout *Safari Sketchbook*. It lends a great sense of the generous man who has not only painted Africa's birds into critically acclaimed books and papers, but also played a pivotal role in establishing and running the African Bird Club.

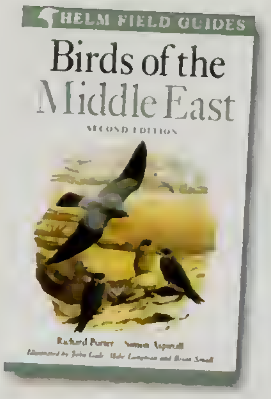
John Fanshawe

Birds of the Middle East. Second edition

Richard Porter & Simon Aspinall, illustrated by John Gale, Mike Langham & Brian Small, 2010. London, UK: Christopher Helm. 384 pp, 176 colour plates and c.800 colour distribution maps. Softback. ISBN 978–07136–76020. UK£29.99.

Although officially the second edition, this title's origins also lie in the original 'desert guide' (Hollom *et al.* 1988, *Birds of the Middle East and North Africa*, T. & A. D. Poyser). A total of six different authors and four artists have been involved, but just one person, Richard Porter, has been a mainstay of all three incarnations. This is more than appropriate as Richard has been a leading light in Middle Eastern birding and conservation for a staggering four decades, yet has lost none of the enthusiasm that led him to Turkey (by train) 44 years ago!

The 'new' *Birds of the Middle East* has finally migrated to traditional field guide format with maps and text facing plates, and the systematic order is also substantially changed. The illustrations (and text) have been extensively revised, with some depictions 'borrowed' from the recent Redman *et al.* (2009) guide to the *Birds of the Horn of Africa* (see *Bull. ABC* 16: 243–244). More might usefully have been repeated too; the Socotra Sunbird *Chalcomitra balfouri* in the latter is markedly better than herein, in my opinion. But, generally, the artwork is of a good standard, with Langman's arguably the weak link, albeit this comment is highly relative.



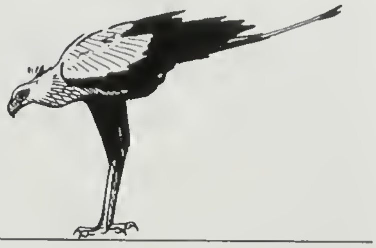
Some 100 'new species' appear in this edition, comprising additions to the regional list as well as the inevitable taxonomic revisions since the first edition (1996). Many such changes are sensibly 'hedged', using parentheses, but I am surprised to see the notion expressed (p. 10) that hybrid gulls (*Larus michahellis* × *L. armenicus*) at a lake in southern Turkey might represent a 'potential or incipient species'! On the plus side, the gulls in general have been subject to a particularly substantial overhaul. The authors have also generally kept well abreast of vagrancy records, but occasional lapses are easily noted, e.g. Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor* and Black Lark *Melanocorypha yeltoniensis* have both occurred in Turkey. On the other hand, they seem to have sensibly ignored claims of Pale Martin *Riparia* (*riparia*) *diluta* in Israel. As an aside, I think the evidence is sufficiently overwhelming to have been unequivocal about 'splitting' *diluta*, thereby also 'ignoring' the brackets.

Nomenclature and taxonomy follow the list prepared by a committee on behalf of the Ornithological Society of the Middle East, which is unsurprising given that both Aspinall and Porter 'sit' on that body. Names are, of course, subject to intensely personal preferences, but 'Eurasian' Crimson-winged Finch seems a curious name for a bird, *Rhodopechys sanguineus*, fundamentally Asian, while history students know that Smyrna Bunting cannot be a correct alternative name for *Emberiza* (*cineracea*) *semenowi* on geographical grounds. Long-standing errors in the scientific names of certain stonechat (*Saxicola*) taxa are perpetuated here.

Given the availability of the Redman *et al.* guide, readers of this Bulletin heading only to Socotra will have no real need of this book, but it will quite rightly be very warmly appreciated by those birding the wider Middle East.

Guy M. Kirwan

Letters to the Editor



Slender-billed Curlew has not occurred in Seychelles

Buchanan *et al.* (2010) summarise the distribution of Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* records in Africa since 1850 in their Fig. 4, showing one verified and one unverified record from Seychelles, while the text refers to '...a couple of records from Seychelles'. If correct, these records would be of some significance, extending the known vagrancy limits of this Critically Endangered species by *c.*2,400 km and representing the first (and only) records for the Southern Hemisphere. Therefore, they merit close inspection. There are two published reports from Seychelles referring to Slender-billed Curlew. The first is from Aldabra, a report involving four birds at two separate locations on 30 November 1967 and states that 'Field description agreed closely with that given by Smith (1963) from Morocco, after very good views both on the ground and flying' (Penny 1971). The second report was of two birds on Cosmoledo in January 1989 (precise date unknown) supported by a written description and listed in Gretton (1991).

When the Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC) was formed in 1992, considerable effort was made to collect and assess as much information as possible on old records including these. SBRC were unable to source the field description referred to by Penny (1971) so it was not possible to consider this as a potential record. Details were obtained for the 1989 report from Cosmoledo including an International Council for Bird Preservation record sheet kindly sourced by Adam Gretton, but the report was not accepted by SBRC as adequate for a first country record. Since then there have been no further reports. Therefore until now, Slender-billed Curlew has not been verified as occurring in Seychelles. In fact, this is by no means an isolated case and in Skerrett *et al.* (2007) SBRC present details of 20 species credited to Seychelles in published sources or museum records that have not been accepted onto the Seychelles list by SBRC.

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Further in relation to the same article, we take this opportunity to note that the Oláh & Pigniczki paper concerning the 2001 Hungarian record of Slender-billed Curlew has now been published, in *Aquila* 116/117: 49–53. Fig. 2 in Buchanan *et al.* was incorrectly attributed to Brayton Holt, but the photographer was Arnoud B. van den Berg and the photograph was taken in January 1988, not as stated. Three birds were present at Merja Zerga at that time. We thank Alison Harding, Graeme Buchanan and Arnoud B. van den Berg, respectively, for these additions and corrections.—The Editors.

Appropriate methodology for transect or point count-based population surveys

Brewster *et al.* (2010) present population estimates for Short-clawed Lark *Certhilauda chuana* in Botswana from counts along road-based transects. Population or density estimation based on counts along transects or points has a long history and there is a considerable literature on the subject (reviewed in Buckland *et al.* 2001). Currently the most widely used and respected method for such surveys is based on distance sampling methodology (Buckland *et al.* 2001, Thomas *et al.* 2009) which estimates density of a population much more robustly than other methods, by calculating the undetected proportion of the surveyed population based on detections of the target objects on or near the transect. The limitations of other line transect population estimation techniques have been widely discussed (see Buckland *et al.* 2001) and are now rarely used because of the development of distance sampling.

Distance sampling requires a number of assumptions for effective density estimation including: (1) individuals on or very close to the line must be detected with certainty; (2) individuals are detected at their initial location; (3) individuals observed on one transect or point should be recorded whether or not they have been observed at a previous transect or point; (4) placement of the transects is random or is stratified with a random start point across the study area; and (5) measurement of distances to individuals is exact.

Based on the points above, Brewster *et al.*'s (2010) study demonstrates some limitations with respect to the accuracy of the population estimate of Short-clawed Lark. These are detailed below and are based on Buckland *et al.* (2001) and Thomas *et al.* (2009).

The transects are not placed randomly across the study area. Transects may be stratified with a random starting point, but should not be based on existing trails or roads as these are very likely to interfere with the behaviour and therefore distribution of the study species. For example, areas along roads could have increased grazing pressure or increased predation pressure from dogs. Additionally, detection of larks on the transect line is likely to be zero because it is unsuitable habitat and this will effect density estimation.

1. The study is based on a hybrid of transects and point counts. It is acceptable to have stratified transects or points based on lines across a site with a random starting point, but it is recommended that there is no overlap between sites of observation (i.e. transects or points) as movement of the target species in response to the observer will affect observation at the next point. For example, singing birds at one point which call in response to playback might elicit singing by males at an adjacent point: this will bias upwards density estimates in high-density areas. An additional confounding factor is that observations made from points will have an area in which the species can be detected of πr^2, but this study records the distance of each lark from the transect line which has an area defined by transect length and width. Thus this may bias density estimates downwards.
2. Individuals should be recorded at all points irrespective of whether they have been recorded previously and failure to do so will bias density estimates downwards.
3. Larks move towards the observer and apparently may do so before being detected by song. This will bias density estimates upwards as distance sampling requires that the number of observations on or close to the line is representative of the normal population as a whole. Additionally, as playback was not applied at each point, the detection rate of all individuals will vary depending on whether playback was carried out at the survey point in its vicinity.
4. As Brewster *et al.* (2010) note, recorded distances to detected individuals were heaped around convenient distance classes and this will bias density estimation.
5. The model used to estimate the fraction of the population that was not observed is inaccurate (see Buckland *et al.* 2001), although this is a moot point because of the other limitations of this study.

This review suggests that this population estimate of Short-clawed Lark may be inaccurate with potentially confounding bias in both directions as a result of the techniques used. This has implications for our understanding of the conservation status of this southern African endemic. Fortunately, the data collected by Brewster *et al.* (2001) may be sufficient to produce an index of the abundance of this species across the study area. Comparison of indices at both a transect and site-based level could provide indicators of population trends between years and relative abundance across the site. This could be quite effective as so many of the transects were repeated between years.

Accurate population estimation for this species could be made across the study area on transects using distance sampling methodology. A future survey should be stratified by habitat and transects placed randomly across each habitat. Only a relatively small number of detections (many fewer than the 400+ recorded by Brewster *et al.* 2010) are required for density estimation at acceptable levels of variance and thus would require lower effort than was used in the original study. Alternatively, as habitat change is the main threat of interest to conservationists, a grid square survey based on occupancy of each grid square in relation to habitat as used by Engelbrecht *et al.* (2007) for this species in South Africa could be sufficient.

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Effectiveness of nest boxes at Naivasha, Kenya

Having only recently read the (2002) article by Michael Macharia in *Bull. ABC* 9: 47–49, concerning the effectiveness of nest boxes at Lake Naivasha, Kenya, I wish to offer the following comments. I have successfully studied several species utilising nest boxes in Naivasha District over the last eight years

(2003–10). Many nest boxes have proved successful at two sites around the lake.

Site A: Lentolia Farm, near Crater Lake Lodge. A total of 27 boxes was utilised by eight species during the period 24 September 2003 to late July / mid-September 2006 when all of the boxes were removed as I moved house. Species using the boxes were: Lilac-breasted Roller *Coracias caudatus*, Red-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus pusillus*, White-headed Barbet *Lybius leucocephalus*, Nubian *Campethera nubica* and Grey Woodpeckers *Dendropicos goertae*, Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*, White-bellied Tit *Parus albiventris* and Superb Starling *Lamprotornis superbus*. In addition, Lesser *Indicator minor* and Scaly-throated Honeyguides *I. variegatus* successfully parasitised three boxes. Also, Rock Martins *Ptyonoprogne fuligula* used nest shelves and Egyptian Geese *Alopochen aegyptiaca* were present in one box for several days but did not breed.

Site B: Green Park Estate. A total of 33 boxes was utilised by ten species during the period 7 September 2008 to May 2010. The species using the boxes were: White-rumped Swift *Apus caffer*, Abyssinian Scimitarbill *Rhinopomastus minor*, Nubian and Grey Woodpeckers, White-bellied and Red-throated Tits *Parus fringillinus*, Cape Robin Chat *Cossypha caffra*, Greater Blue-eared Starling *Lamprotornis chalybaeus*, Red-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus erythrorhynchus* and Kenya Rufous Sparrow *Passer rufocinctus*. In addition, Greater *Indicator indicator* and Scaly-throated Honeyguides successfully parasitised five boxes. The Green Park study is still ongoing.

It is abundantly clear that several hole-nesting species will readily accept nest boxes in the Naivasha area, and despite the high levels of brood parasitism by both Greater and Scaly-throated Honeyguides on several species (the Abyssinian Scimitarbill laid six clutches in less than one year as a result), the entire nest box study continues to be a great success.

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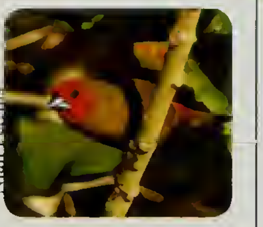

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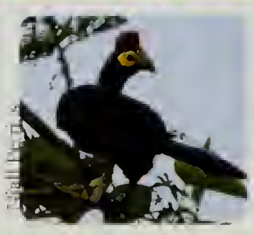

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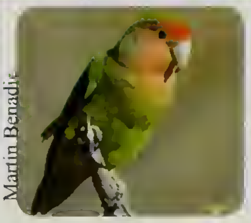

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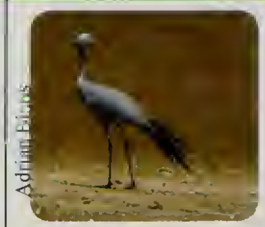

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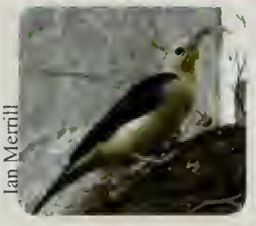

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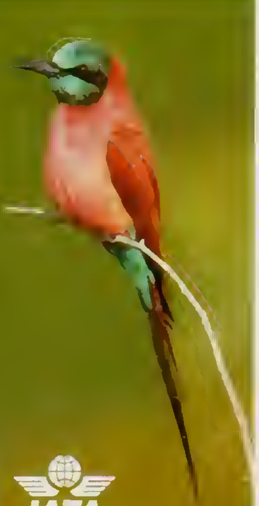

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The ABC Representatives scheme aims to support existing members by providing a local point of contact in their region, for example, to answer queries to the Club, to solicit submissions for the bulletin, and possibly to arrange local meetings for members. Existing ABC members can contact their local Representative in the first instance with queries relating to the Club. ABC Representatives help to recruit new members in their region, for example, by distributing posters and arranging local advertising. In Africa, ABC Representatives help to identify opportunities to invest the ABC Conservation Fund and candidates for the Supported Membership scheme.

The Club aims to appoint many further ABC Representatives. If you are interested in supporting and promoting the Club in your region, have any queries, or require further information relating to the ABC Representatives scheme please do not hesitate to contact the Membership Secretary at the Club address, e-mail membership@africanbirdclub.org.

ABC is seeking Country Representatives in the following countries, principally within the Club's region: Algeria, Azores, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde Islands, Chad, Comoros & Mayotte, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Madeira, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Netherlands, Niger, Réunion, Rodriguez, Sierra Leone, Socotra, Somalia, St Helena, Sudan, Togo, Tristan da Cunha and USA.

Supported and Affiliated Membership

The Supporting Members scheme is a key part of the Club's strategy of encouraging the spread of knowledge and understanding of birds as widely as possible throughout Africa. The scheme enables Africans who would not otherwise have the resources to join, to become members of the Club. The scheme is funded by Supporting Members who pay a minimum of UK£30 to cover their own membership and the subscription of at least one African member. The money they contribute over and above their own subscription is placed in a special fund that is used to cover the membership expenses of African members whom they may have nominated, or who have been nominated by other Club members.

Although we have suggested a minimum of UK£30 to become a Supporting Member, any contribution is welcome. All members of the Club, even if they do not feel able to become Supporting Members themselves, are invited to nominate candidates for supported memberships. Candidates should be nationals of an African country, with a genuine interest in wild birds but without the resources to become members in their own right. Africans who think they may qualify are very welcome to put their own names forward, supported by a letter of recommendation from someone such as their employer, teacher or an officeholder in a local wildlife organisation.

The scheme now also includes clubs who wish to be affiliated with the African Bird Club in African countries where it is difficult for local individuals to become members in their own right. Clubs accepted for membership under the scheme receive up to six copies of each issue of the bulletin for circulation among their members. Instead of paying a membership fee, Clubs are asked to provide a short annual report on their activities that may be published in the bulletin. Clubs interested in becoming Affiliated Member Clubs are invited to apply to the ABC Secretary giving details of their membership, their constitution or a statement of their objectives and conditions of their membership, and their activities to date.

ABC Information Service

ABC offers a service to help members with information requests. Perhaps you are planning a trip to Africa and need local advice, or maybe you are in search of an obscure fact about an African species. The Club does not guarantee to find all the answers but will try to help. The service is free to ABC members. Contact: Keith Betton, who is also custodian of ABC's journal library, at 8 Dukes Close, Folly Hill, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 0DR, UK. Tel: +44 1252 724068. E-mail: info@africanbirdclub.org.

AfricanBirding e-mail discussion list

Launched, in October 2000, by the ABC and the Pan-African Ornithological Congress, AfricanBirding or AB, as it is known, has become a useful forum for those interested in African birds. To join the discussion, which averages 1–2 messages a day, send a blank e-mail to AfricanBirding-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. You will then receive an e-mail instructing you how to join.

The Club also maintains a list of members' e-mail addresses. This list is confidential and used only for Club purposes, e.g. for informing members of upcoming events and news concerning the Club. It is not divulged to anybody outside the Club or used for commercial advertising. At present it includes addresses for about 50% of the membership. Please send any additions or amendments to the membership secretary: membership@africanbirdclub.org.

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